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The REV.D THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

CONVERSATIONS

ON THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT;

SHEWING THAT

EVERY THING IS FROM GOD,

AND

FOR GOOD, TO ALL.

AND GOD SAW EVERY THING THAT HE HAD MADE,
AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD.
GENESIS i. 31.

BY

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

LONDON:

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1802.

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PRINTED BY SYE ALE [illegible], ST. JOHN'S SQUARE, CLERKENWELL.

TO

MRS. SOPHIA AND MRS. FRANCES CHAMBERS,

IN GRATITUDE FOR UNWEARIED OFFICES OF THE MOST DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP, FOR NEAR THIRTY YEARS, TO HIMSELF AND MRS. LINDSEY, FROM THEM AND THEIR WORTHY BROTHER, NOW ALAS! INSENSIBLE OF ANY TRIBUTE, THOUGH EQUALLY DUE; AND IN TESTIMONY OF THEIR ENLIGHTENED ZEAL FOR THE WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD, AND A CONSTANT UNOSTENTATIOUS READINESS TO DO GOOD; THIS VOLUME OF CONVERSATIONS, THE RECOLLECTION AND THE FRUITS OF THE HAPPY REPOSE AND LEISURE, ENJOYED IN THEIR DELIGHTFUL SUMMER RECESS AT MORDON IN SURRY, IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR VERY AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following work reſults from the ſtudy and experience of a long life, devoted principally to the ſervice of the goſpel. From diligent reſearches into the true meaning and ſpirit of the ſacred writings, the author has been led to various deviations from the creed of the eſtabliſhed church: his opinions have, at different times, been laid before the public; and, if the diſcouragements attending the profeſſion of his faith have been very conſiderable, he is happy and thankful to have lived in a country, where not only ſuch appeals have been practicable, but he has been ſupported by ſeveral of his countrymen, who renouncing the errors of their

education, have openly avowed their faith in only one God, the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

The gloomy unjuſt ideas which ſome entertain of the Divine Being; the avowed or reſtrained doubts of others with reſpect to the ſacred hiſtory of the firſt ages and facts of an extraordinary interference in the deluge; crude and unjuſtifiable attacks on the revered characters of *Abraham*, *Moſes*, *Elijah*, and *Eliſha* *, &c. Theſe with ſimilar things being thrown out in converſe, before thoſe for whoſe peace and happineſs the author is much intereſted,

* For a complete vindication of the characters of Elijah and Eliſha, a juſtification of the former *for praying againſt rain, and for calling down deſtructive fire from heaven*; and of the latter, *for curſing the young men of Bethel*, ſee the very excellent and ſatisfactory ſermons on theſe ſubjects, in the firſt volume of Sermons by Joſeph Morris. London, ſold by J. Noon, 1743.

put

put him on turning his attention to ſuch facts and arguments, as by others as well as himſelf, have been found ſatisfactory.

The importance of the ſubject may be an apology for ſome repetitions; and till a full conviction is wrought in the mind, that the government of this world is the wiſeſt that could have been adopted, and that the evils and diſtreſſes of life, (of which we are not ſo good judges as the child juſt able to talk is of the corrections of a tender mother,) are not permitted, but for the good of all; the attention of the public cannot be too often ſolicited for the vindication of our Creator. Under the hope of promoting in ſome degree the intereſt of his fellow-creatures in ſo noble a cauſe, and of leading them to their

happieſt ſtate, a full confidence and ſatisfaction in the never-ceaſing love of their maker and God, the following remarks, imperfect as they are, are committed to the candour and ſerious attention of the benevolent reader.

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CONVER-

CONVERSATIONS

ON THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT, &c.

VICTORIN TO VOLUSIAN.

I HAVE a ſingular ſatisfaction oftentimes in recollecting a converſation which took place ſome years ſince at ******, the country-ſeat of our reſpectable friend, in which you bore no inconſiderable part, and in my opinion came off with more honour than thoſe that were crowned in the Olympic games; an honour that, however, not to be attained without much labour and ſelf-denial. But you gained a victory over yourſelf, and many narrow and inveterate religious prejudices which you had the courage to renounce, and notwithſtanding obloquy and various worldly diſadvantages, have ever ſince remained firm in the profeſſion and worſhip of the one true

God and father of the univerſe, as preſcribed and practiſed by Jeſus Chriſt.

In the account of the converſation to which I allude, it is ſtated, that the way of worſhip, which you, after much inquiry and deliberation embraced, was that held forth to the engliſh nation and to the church of England in particular, in the

Amendments humbly propoſed to the conſideration of thoſe in authority, of the Book of Common Prayer —— —— according to the uſe of the Church of England. By Samuel Clarke, D. D. *Rector of* St. James's, Weſtminſter.

Such is the modeſt ſtyle, in which this excellent perſon ſpeaks of what had been the fruits of many years labour and thought to promote the honour and credit of the eſtabliſhed church, and a purer worſhip of God in it.

What farther information may be deſired concerning this valuable manuſcript work of Dr. *Clarke*, which, after his deceaſe was preſented by his ſon Mr. *Clarke* to the Britiſh Muſeum,

Muſeum, and depoſited there, may be found in a Tract, intitled, "Converſations on chriſtian idolatry," from p. 181, to the end—printed in 1791, for Mr. *Johnſon*, St. Paul's Church-yard.

And I cannot forbear adding that from ſome facts reported at the cloſe of that Tract, it may appear probable, that the pure worſhip of the One true God, might ſilently and quietly, in a courſe of time, have then made its way * in France, had the firſt happy revolution in that country proceeded and continued as it began, and not been followed by ſuch dire and violent convulſions. It affords however a pleaſing omen of what may hereafter take place there in more favourable times.

But I have run out to a much greater length than I intended, and almoſt loſt ſight of the principal purport of my letter, which is; that having juſt now come to the know-

* See the French Conſtitution, pp. 371—375, the 2d edition, with corrections and additions, by Benjamin Flower.

lege, that you and our common friends, the laſt long vacation, had paſſed ſome weeks together, and during the time had fallen upon the diſcuſſion of a very curious and intereſting queſtion, and come to an unanimous reſolution upon it, *viz.* that *there is nothing really and ultimately ill in the ſtate of man, but every thing ordered for the beſt for all:* I cannot find words to expreſs the ſatisfaction I ſhould receive in being made acquainted with the ſteps by which you have been led to this concluſion, and with all that paſſed relating to it. I would not give you, I ſhould be aſhamed of giving you ſo much trouble merely to gratify curioſity; but it might perhaps contribute to free me from a hoſt of anxious thoughts that beſet me continually, and oftentimes make life a burden.

VOLUSIAN TO VICTORIN.

FOR one ſo much loved and valued as yourſelf, I can think no trouble too great, whereby I may give you pleaſure or profit, nor can I have any reſerves with you; and therefore

therefore without further preface I ſit down to tell you, that the old party of your friends being met together, and lamenting not a little that you alone were prevented joining us, after talking over for a while the aſtoniſhing events of the times we lived in, we fell into conſideration of the very low repute in which the religion of *Chriſt* was every where held, at home and abroad; being rejected by many as entirely fabulous; and little regarded by the greater part of thoſe who would not be thought to give it up altogether.

One, who was preſent, mentioned, from his own knowlege, that a ſhort time before the French Revolution, a perſon lately filling a very high ſtation, of great worth and diſcernment, who lived very much at Paris, and in the firſt circles; and was ſometimes in Holland, and other parts of the continent, where he converſed with the moſt eminent men of different ranks and profeſſions, found it to be a general perſuaſion among them all, though it was not his own, that the chriſtian religion would ſoon be at an end; being experienced, as exhibited and enforced by public authority in all ſtates, to be ſo irrational

a ſyſtem, and hoſtile to the true intereſts and happineſs of ſociety, as to be incapable of maintaining its ground any longer. What followed ſoon after in France is well known.

Nor was this the caſe of thoſe called catholic countries only, where the ſtate-religion was ſo offenſive to every mind in any degree enlightened. He would appeal to them all, as they were not ignorant of what paſſed among ourſelves, whether they had not long obſerved, that our eſtabliſhed articles of faith, and the worſhip grounded upon them, paſſing for the very goſpel of *Chriſt*, had not cauſed many ſilently to withdraw themſelves, and take refuge in the religion of nature's teaching: and this indiſpoſition to Chriſtianity had much prevailed within theſe laſt twenty years, and was rapidly increaſing.

Here (*Photinus*,) interpoſing, replied; that he did not like to hear them deſcant in ſo deſponding a ſtrain on a ſubject, which ſeemed to him by no means to call for it; becauſe the proſtrate appearance of chriſtianity in our own and the neighbouring countries, and the hoſtility of many to it, might be ſhewn to ariſe, not from any newly diſcovered weakneſs

neſs or deficiency in its proofs, but from other cauſes which might be aſſigned; but principally, perhaps, from the interference of the civil power, in requiring this religion, exactly as modelled and taught by them, to be believed and practiſed by all, under the ſevereſt penalties and loſs; thereby creating prejudices againſt it; and alſo hindering all free inquiry into it, by which alone it could maintain its preeminence in the world, if it were the truth; and thus turning it almoſt in all places into an engine of ſtate, to keep mankind in ſlavery and darkneſs.

This it was, which ſo much excited the philoſophers of France, as they called themſelves, to oppoſe the Bible, and filled them with a moſt unreaſonable antipathy to it; being prepoſſeſſed with an idea, that the religion built upon it, which they found profeſſed in their own country, was a fanaticiſm ſo hurtful, and ſanguinary, and adverſe to every thing virtuous and friendly to mankind, that it was meritorious to deſtroy it by any means; ſo that they made no ſcruple of uſing the moſt unfair arts, and adopting known falſehoods, to effect their purpoſe.

Of this diſhoneſt dealing, to give it its true name, you have continual examples in the writings of *Monſ. de Voltaire*, where he touches on the ſubject; but his unworthy artifice, and diſingenuouſneſs in this reſpect are detailed at length in * Letters ſaid to be of ſeveral Portugueſe, German, and Poliſh jews to M. de Voltaire, in 3 vols. 8vo.; but really written by a learned prieſt and doctor of the Sorbonne. *Mr. Findlay* alſo in 1770, now *Dr. Findlay*, the learned Preſident of Glaſgow-college, has well expoſed theſe practices, by which this eminent writer has ſtained his great abilities, and leſſened his character.

As the beſt things have ever been liable to be perverted, we muſt frankly acknowlege, for no one acquainted with hiſtory can deny, that great corruptions have ariſen from the goſpel, and abuſes to the worſt purpoſes have been made of it, and cauſed many to think ill of and condemn it. A fair inquirer however will confeſs that it has always been of conſiderable benefit to mankind, and that it

* Lettres de quelques Juifs Portugais, Allemands et Polonois, à M. de Voltaire. A Paris. 1776.

is in itſelf moſt friendly to the peace and happineſs of ſociety, as was teſtified by a candid heathen * hiſtorian of the fourth century, upon ſeeing the diſturbances, to which it innocently gave occaſion, and the murders, and cruelties towards each other, which the chriſtians were guilty of at that early period. And notwithſtanding the preſent indifference, and deſertion of many, and the aſſaults made upon the goſpel by its various adverſaries all along from the firſt, (none more fierce and ſubtle than thoſe of the preſent day,) we may not be afraid boldly to maintain, that it ſtands upon a rock, that cannot be ſhaken; viz. upon the truth of this ſingle fact, of *Jeſus*, its author, being a divinely authorized teacher, a prophet of God; which was evinced and confirmed by the miracles wrought by him, to which he appealed; and, principally, by his being raiſed from the dead in three days, in conformity to his own predictions.

The divine authority likewiſe of *Moſes*, the Jewiſh lawgiver, his predeceſſor, was built on

* Ammianus Marcellinus. Lib. xxii. c. 11.

Quæ nihil niſi juſtum ſuadet et lene.

the

the like immoveable foundation of a divine interference, ſignified by mighty miracles, publicly wrought, and recognized by their *effects* at the time, in the reception of ſuch a religion, at firſt, ſo burdenſome and irkſome, by the Iſraelites, not otherwiſe to be accounted for, but on the footing of real miracles; *effects*, which, if we may ſo ſpeak, have continued to the preſent hour, in the rigorous adherence of that people and their deſcendants to their religion, under the temptations they have continually been to deſert it; ſcattered, moreover, as they have been, and are, over the face of the whole earth, and moſt unworthily and unceaſingly vilified and ill-treated as Jews, wherever they go; its truth alſo corroborated ſtill farther by the actual fulfilment of ancient * prophecies relating to the diſperſion and other circumſtances of this extraordinary people; not to mention the atteſtation given to their religion from the

* See, to name no others, *Moſes*'s prophecy concerning the captivity of the Iſraelites, of a State not yet erected; and the exact fulfilment of *Chriſt*'s prophecy, not to ſay of that of *Moſes*, in ſo many exact particulars, and the long captivity that was to follow. Deut. xxviii. Luke xix. xxi.

goſpel

goſpel being a continuation of one and the ſame extraordinary plan of divine providence for the virtuous improvement and happineſs of the whole human race.

To theſe revelations from heaven by *Moſes* and by *Jeſus Chriſt*, for the moſt beneficent purpoſes, to make mankind virtuous and happy; it is objected, that their foundations fail on being examined, becauſe the proofs of the interpoſition of the divine Being in their favour are not to be depended upon, reſting ſolely on the teſtimony of weak and fallible mortals, who have in all ages delighted in inventing, liſtening to, and propagating ſtories of wonderful things, of apparitions and communications with their falſe gods, to countenance their various ſuperſtitions and idolatrous practices, and ſuch practices have been too much imitated and encouraged by Chriſtians themſelves.

The imputation muſt be allowed to have ſome foundation; and this credulous turn and weakneſs ought ever to put us on our guard, that we ſuffer not ourſelves to be deceived by falſe pretences to a divine extraordinary power:

power: but it does not invalidate the teſtimony of mankind to thoſe inſtances of it, which are accompanied with ſufficient evidence, and not loaded with any unnatural contradictory circumſtances.

It ſhould be remembered, however, that it is a miſrepreſentation of theſe divine interpoſitions in behalf of the goſpel, when it is alleged, that they are brought to prove the truth of its doctrines, of which, unqueſtionably, they are not proper proofs: thoſe primary truths, for inſtance, of Chriſt's religion, and of all true religion; namely, that God is to be loved and obeyed before all things; that virtue, or the love of our fellowcreatures, ſo as to ſeek their happineſs as our own, is to be cultivated by us: theſe and the like doctrines have their proper evidence, founded in the nature of man and the relation between him and his Maker, independent of miracles, which can add nothing to them in that reſpect.

The proper province and deſign of miracles is, to confirm the authority of a prophet or divine meſſenger in what he delivers concerning

cerning the will and government of God, and men's future deſtination, where their natural light and faculties fail them. And in this view, for this purpoſe, *Chriſt* conſtantly appealed to them; referring men to *the works*, which his father impowered him to perform, as the evidence of his coming from God; of which they were the direct proofs. Although they are calculated, and may alſo be deſigned to revive and powerfully to recall men's attention to important truths within their knowledge, but overlooked and neglected by them.

Some, indeed, would prejudge and ſet aſide at once the whole of the extraordinary and divine communications recorded in the ſcriptures, as entirely fabulous, arguing it to be inconſiſtent with the character and attributes of the great firſt cauſe, the ſupreme, all-perfect Being, and therefore impoſſible for him to alter the courſe of nature eſtabliſhed by himſelf, and to interrupt thoſe laws of his own appointment, by which he governs and preſerves the world.

We

We ſhould here take care, that we are not impoſed on by words, that ſignify nothing. For what do we mean by *nature*, but the art, if we may ſo ſpeak, of the great Creator, his workmanſhip; the regular ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects appointed by him; by which every thing is brought to paſs? And who ſhall take upon him to ſay, that it is unbecoming him, or that his power is in any way limited and reſtrained ſo that he cannot interrupt the general order of things appointed by himſelf, to promote his wiſe and benevolent deſigns?

Perhaps this prejudice and difficulty, that has been ſtarted againſt all miraculous interpoſitions, as implicating a weakneſs of conduct in the ſupreme Being, we may, on a nearer inſpection, perceive to take its riſe purely from men's imperfect conceptions of the divine agency and government.

Here, we muſt ever profeſs ourſelves in the dark, and moſt defective in our judgements, concerning the manner in which the deity acts; and therefore ſpeak with reverence and diffidence.

But,

But, as we are perſuaded, from what we ſee and know, that he made all things with moſt conſummate wiſdom, and for the beſt purpoſes of univerſal good, our higheſt thoughts of him lead us to conclude, that when he created the world, all future events were before him, known and foreſeen in their cauſes; and every, the minuteſt circumſtance relating to every creature, contrived and directed ultimately to anſwer the end deſigned; ſince without this, his wiſe and kind deſigns might be liable to be continually croſſed and defeated.

In agreement with this idea, the apoſtle ſays, Acts xv. 18. *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* And we may humbly preſume, that we do not err, in ſuppoſing, that the Almighty did at firſt, and originally, ſo deviſe and lay out his courſe of nature, as we term it, the whole train of cauſes and effects, all that was to befall his whole creation and each individual in it, throughout all future time, that thoſe events, which we call ſupernatural, ſhould be the reſult of eſtabliſhed laws, and a more comprehenſive plan of things, though unperceived

ceived by us; as much as the moſt ordinary events, our ſuſtenance and ſupport in life, and that of all other animals, is the effect of thoſe laws, that we ſee to be eſtabliſhed: So that in the eye of a being, who could take in the whole of the divine adminiſtration and operations, thoſe called miraculous, are as much the reſult of general laws, as the moſt ordinary events.

The *courſe of nature*, of which we hear ſo much, and cannot hear too much, if properly viewed and conſidered by us; thoſe moſt curious and exact laws, both in the natural and moral ſyſtem, by which the univerſe is upheld and preſerved, we cannot ſufficiently extoll and admire. Thoſe who have moſt minutely ſcanned and inquired into and beſt underſtood them, *Barrow*, *Boyle*, *Maclaurin*, (to name a few only of our own countrymen) have not been able to contain themſelves from breaking out into ſuch holy raptures in contemplation of that wiſdom and goodness, which formed and preſerves the whole of things, as might kindle a flame of devotion in the coldeſt breaſt.

This

This may be a leſſon to us, in our ſtudy of nature and its ſtupendous laws, not to loſe ſight of the great being, who framed it. For we find ſome ſo ſwallowed up in their diſquiſitions and reſearches into the wonderful contrivance with which all the parts of the vaſt machine are put together, and ſo doting on their diſcoveries of ſome of the ſecret powers and energies by which it is conducted, as to imagine, that theſe powers and energies are ſomething, as it were, inherent in matter, diſtinct from, and independent of its maker. And as all things ſeem to go on of themſelves, (for they *ſee not him* whoſe * ſecret agency directs and ſupports the whole) they are blindly led on to ſpeculate, whether all things did not alſo begin of themſelves without him; and thus fall into the gulph of Atheiſm, which ſees nothing ſuperior to itſelf in the univerſe.

To guard againſt ſo fatal a deluſion, I beg, my friends, you will excuſe my urging it upon you, to hold faſt the plain old argument for Deity, obvious to every underſtanding, and

* Heb. xi. 27.

equally decisive to the highest as the lowest; viz. that next to the consciousness and conviction which we have of our own existence, there is nothing, of which we can be so absolutely certain, or which is so clearly demonstrable to us, as that there is a God, an intelligent first cause, and benevolent author of all things; because, otherwise the world we live in, with all its furniture and inhabitants, constructed with the most consummate art, and abounding, at every view, the more it is sought into, with innumerable marks of wisdom and kind design; connected also and mutually dependent throughout all its parts, as far as we can descry, must have come into being of itself, without any original designing mind: which is a supposition, not to be entertained by any one, whose intellectual powers are found and unimpaired.

I remember *D'Alembert*, who was careful latterly not to concede too much upon this question, in his correspondence with the King of Prussia, is compelled to say, " * I think

* Je pense en particulier, par rapport á l'existence d'une intelligence supreme, que ceux qui la nient avancent bien plus qu'ils ne peuvent prouver, et qu'il n'y a dans

think particularly, that with regard to the exiſtence of a ſupreme intelligence, thoſe who deny it go much farther than they can warrant, and that in all this buſineſs there is an unreaſonable ſcepticiſm. Certainly no one can deny, that there is in the univerſe, and particularly in the ſtructure of plants and animals, ſuch a combination of parts, as manifeſts intelligence, and proves the exiſtence of this intelligence, as a watch proves the exiſtence of a watchmaker. This appears to be undeniable."

The ſame thought is taken up by *Voltaire*, p. 4, of his Reply to the Syſtem of Nature *.

" Your

dans cette matiere que la ſcepticiſme deraiſonable. On ne peut nier ſans doute, qu'il n'y a dans l'univers, et en particulier dans la ſtructure des animaux et des plantes, de combinaiſons de parties qui ſemblent deceler une intelligence; elles prouvent l'exiſtence de cette intelligence, comme une montre prouve l'exiſtence d'un horloger; cela parait inconteſtable.

* Votre ſauvage qui devine qu'une montre eſt faite par un horloger, parce qu'il a quelque idée de l'induſtrie humaine, eſt precifement la preuve de l'exiſtence de Dieu. Je ſuis le ſauvage: la montre eſt l'univers: l'horloger eſt le formateur de l'univers. J'ai quelque idée de l'induſtrie

" Your ſavage, (ſays he, ch. v. p. 11, p. 159.) who gueſſes a watch to be the work of a watchmaker, becauſe he has ſome idea of the effects of the induſtry of man, is preciſely the proof I offer of the exiſtence of God. I am that ſavage. The watch is the univerſe. I have ſome idea of induſtry in general. I behold the world, in which a wonderful induſtry diſplays itſelf on all ſides, and I adore the author."

Mirabaud, or whoever was the author of that work, muſt have been affected, when at the cloſe of a ſimilar argument, *Voltaire* turns to him *, " Why, my friend, why will you not let me adore that great intelligent being, who has beſtowed life and thought upon me? Let me add, Take care of being found un-

en general : je vois le monde dans lequel une induſtrie merveilleuſe eclate de toutes parts ; et j'adore l'auteur.

REPONSE au Syſteme de la Nature, page 12.

* Pourquoi ne voulez vous pas que j'adore ce grand Etre intelligent et puiſſant qui m'a donné la vie et la penſée ? J'ajouterai, craignez d'etre ingrat, vous á qui il a donné tant d'eſprit ; ce n'eſt pas certainement vous qui vous l'etes donné.

Ibid. page 11.

grateful,

grateful, you, to whom he has given ſuch talents and powers! It is certain, you have not given them to yourſelf."

It is not, however, entirely, mens doubts concerning the poſſibility or reality of miracles, or concerning the truth of the ſacred hiſtory connected with them; nor any preſumed diſcoveries of the hidden powers and energies of nature, that have put them on rejecting divine revelation, and led not a few of them to deny the being of a God, and take refuge in the gloomy idea of a fatherleſs world. It is a difficulty of a more ſerious kind, from which it ſometimes originates; the perplexity that worthy thinking perſons are often thrown into, how to reconcile appearances in the world of nature, and the imperfect and forlorn ſtate of mankind with the ſuppoſition of a perfectly wiſe and good moral adminiſtration. "If there be a being perfectly wiſe and good at the head of the univerſe, why ſuch a miſerable world, ſo much natural evil, pain and ſuffering, and ſo much vice and wretchedneſs? Why are not all men virtuous and happy? And, why ſo

little apparent amendment for the better among chriſtians, and ſo great a majority of them doomed to endleſs ſuffering hereafter, or to annihilation, with ſo great an expence of miracles and of a divine extraordinary power made to ſo little purpoſe?

Could we find a clue to lead us ſafe out of this labyrinth, and to teach us how to juſtify the dealings of God with mankind, conſiſtently with that perfect goodneſs, which we muſt ever aſcribe to him, if we believe him to be at all; we ſhall provide the beſt remedy againſt, and, in time, put an end to the prevailing ſcepticiſm.

Here the company riſing up, *Marcellinus*, in the name of them all, declared their obligations to *Photinus*, for giving them cauſe not to deſpair of the fortunes and ſucceſs of the goſpel, notwithſtanding its preſent low condition; and for ſo ſeaſonably reminding them of the ſolid foundation, on which the belief of God, the infinitely wiſe creator and ſupreme governor of all things was immoveably placed; as this muſt lead the way to all ſatis-

ſatisfactory enquiry concerning his diſpoſitions towards us and our expectations from him.

He was alſo perſuaded, that he ſhould ſpeak the ſentiments of all preſent as well as his own, by ſuggeſting, that if they could but engage the friend, to whom they already owed ſo much, to favour them with thoſe farther thoughts which they knew he had well digeſted upon this very weighty ſubject, there would be nothing more for them to deſire, and therefore he would take the liberty to be their ſpokeſman and entreat his compliance.

To this *Photinus* frankly replied, that to take ſuch a talk upon him on ſo formal an invitation was quite formidable to a plain man, and implied too much expectation; but if they could be contented with knowing in what manner he had endeavoured to ſatisfy his own mind in a matter of ſo much importance, he ſhould not be unwilling to gratify them. But as they all might well be wearied with ſuch a long grave diſcourſe, he ſhould

propoſe their taking up the ſubject again at their next meeting. To this the company aſſented, and the reſult of our future converſation I ſhall take the firſt opportunity of communicating.

CON-

CONVERSATION II.

SECTION I.

ON the day fixed, the company being aſſembled, *Voluſian*, who during the former converſation, had been very attentive, expreſſed much ſatisfaction that all the party had been punctual to the appointment; and addreſſing his diſcourſe particularly to *Photinus*, told him, that he had liſtened with much ſatisfaction to all that had fallen from him, but might probably have miſunderſtood what he had advanced concerning thoſe who rejected all divine revelation, as being commonly induced to it from dark views of the preſent ſcene of things and of the ways of providence, which indiſpoſed them towards the Deity, and all communications from him. This might be true in ſome inſtances, but there were many exceptions to it, and one of great note, the noble author of *the Characteriſticks*, who was well known to have admirably pleaded the cauſe of a God and a providence; that in the world we inhabit, the con-

conſtitution of things is perfectly moral, vice the road to miſery, and the virtuous of mankind happy: although at times he was held too plainly to intimate his little value for the ſacred volumes, eſpecially that of the Old Teſtament.

Photinus thanked him for his obſervations, and for giving him an opportunity of further explaining his ſentiments. He had no doubt himſelf of the character of unbelievers of the preſent day being pretty much as he had deſcribed it. But he was not inſenſible that there were ſome of a very different claſs, who acknowleged on all proper occaſions, and ſhewed a profound reverence for the Deity, and gave reaſon to believe that they endeavoured in their actions to approve themſelves to him. If the author of *the Characteriſticks* is to be reckoned in that claſs, few chriſtians, it muſt be confeſſed, ſeemed impreſſed with ſo full and conſtant a ſenſe of the divine preſence and benignity, and thoſe chearful expectations of favour hereafter, with which it might be gathered that he was penetrated, from innumerable paſſages in his writings, where

where it is evident he ſpoke from the heart, and from the moſt ſerious conviction.

One paſſage, which I hope never to forget, in his "Inquiry concerning virtue," p. 57, beſpeaks this in a high degree; and I ſhall gratify you, I am perſuaded, by repeating it: "Where the theiſtical belief," ſays he, "is entire and perfect, there muſt be a ſteady opinion of the ſuperintendency of a ſupreme Being, a witneſs and ſpectator of human life, and conſcious of whatever is felt or acted in the univerſe: ſo that in the perfecteſt receſs, or deepeſt ſolitude there muſt be ONE ſtill preſumed remaining with us; whoſe preſence ſingly muſt be of more moment than that of the moſt auguſt aſſembly upon earth. In ſuch a Preſence 'tis evident, that as the ſhame of guilty actions muſt be the greateſt of any, ſo muſt the honour be of well doing, even under the unjuſt cenſure of a world." Of one thing however I cannot doubt, that if he ever relinquiſhed his belief of chriſtianity, which is a thing by no means certain, he was much indebted to it for thoſe leſſons of the moſt pure and ſublime morality, for which his writings are juſtly admired.

But

But now we are thrown upon the ſubject, as we are not limited in our time, it may not only be an amuſement, but of ſome uſe, to endeavour to ſtate, whether there be any grounds for chriſtians to reckon this celebrated perſon one of their number.

It is to be collected from thoſe very ſcanty memorials which are preſerved of this third Earl of *Shaftſbury*, that from his infancy a very extraordinary care was taken to bring him acquainted with the learned languages of Greece and Rome, the key to all the knowledge of the antients, in which he afterwards excelled in an eminent degree; and we may be aſſured an eſpecial attention would alſo be paid to form the mind to every thing that bore relation to piety and virtue, as Mr. *Locke* is known to have been particularly conſulted in the care of his education.

His ſerioufneſs in the profeſſion of the chriſtian religion, into which he was early initiated, is recounted on ſeveral occaſions in his youth, and ſeems to have grown up with him. But what principally ſhewed his firm and rational conviction of the truth of the goſpel,

goſpel, his high value for it, and zeal and earneſtneſs to bring others to the knowlege of it, and to imbibe its ſpirit, was a publication made by him, in 1698, when he was 27 years of age, of a volume of ſermons by Dr. *Whichcot*, a Divine of the church of England, juſtly held in the higheſt reverence and eſteem. Theſe ſermons this young man of quality was at the pains to ſearch out and collect from perſons, who had taken them down in ſhort-hand as they were delivered from the pulpit, ſuch being the modeſty of this very celebrated preacher in his day both in the univerſity of Cambridge and afterwards in this great city, as would never let him print any of his diſcourſes. The noble editor appears to have been very accurate in preparing the volume for the preſs, which he publiſhed with a preface of his own of ſome length, but without his name.

In this preface, Lord *Aſhley*, for his father was then living, ſpeaks of chriſtianity, as one that underſtood and loved it; as "a religion where love is chiefly enjoyned; where the heart is expreſsly called for; and the outward action without that is diſregarded; and charity

charity (or kindneſs) is made all in all." And throughout the whole of the diſcourſes, it is ſeen, what excellent creatures in all reſpects mankind would become, if influenced and governed by the principles of the goſpel.

Several years afterwards, from February 1707 to July 1710, we have a ſeries of Letters, written after he came to his eſtate and titles, to a young Student at the univerſity of Oxford, who was there, at his expence and under his direction, preparing for the miniſtry in the church of England. Theſe letters beſpeak the writer's high value for chriſtianity, and ſhew in a moſt edifying manner, thoſe ſentiments of true piety and genuine goodneſs by which he was conſtantly guided himſelf, and which he ſtrove to inſtil into this young perſon *.

Soon

* A beautiful edition of Lord Shaftſbury's Letters to a ſtudent of the univerſity, was republiſhed a few years ago, and diſtributed by James Martin, Eſq. the truly conſcientious Member for Tewkeſbury, as one way among many others in which he might enlighten and benefit mankind, ever his deſire and delight.

I would beg leave here to bear my teſtimony to a truly laudable though rare cuſtom, inſtituted by the above gentle-

Soon after this, in the year 1711, he went abroad on account of his health, which had long been very delicate and precarious, and died at Naples, in the beginning of the year 1713, having barely compleated his 42d year.

A ſlight preſumption, ought not, it would ſeem, to overſet the weight of this evidence for the author of *the Characteriſticks* being a chriſtian; and yet we ſhall meet with ſome things that will cauſe heſitation. We have his writings, which may be ſaid to contain his real ſentiments, as they were reviſed by

gentleman, of daily collecting his children and family before breakfaſt to hear a moral, or inſtructive diſcourſe or a ſermon, as it happens, and concluding by a ſhort addreſs to the Divine Being: thus beginning every day as a Chriſtian ought; and which cannot enough be recommended and followed.

No company in the houſe interrupts this ſervice, no buſineſs, either in town or country: And children thus inured to ſit ſtill and liſten muſt learn ſomething, and when older are called to read the prayer aloud, getting by ſuch means a habit and impreſſions which can never wholly die away and be loſt in their future intercourſe with the world.

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him for republication, during the leiſure, which his long ſtay at Naples afforded him in the two laſt years of his life.

In them he appears to have contracted undue prejudices againſt ſome diſtinguiſhed characters and tranſactions, which are ſpoken of with commendation in the ſacred writings, betraying too great a willingneſs to ſee things in the moſt unfavourable point of view. This appears in his diſpoſition to give credit to other hiſtorians rather than thoſe who were moſt competent to the facts they treat of; in what he ſays concerning the rite of circumciſion among the Hebrews; in his inſinuations againſt *Abraham*, and imputing his readineſs, at the known command of God, to have put his ſon to death, to a proneneſs for human ſacrifices in thoſe days, inſtead of extolling the pious and right diſpoſitions he ſhewed on that occaſion, which this noble author would not have failed to do, had he conſidered the hiſtory and all its circumſtances without prejudice: in his ſeeking to depreciate and aſperſe the fair unſpotted name of *Joſeph*, governor of the country under *Pharaoh*, as combined with the prieſts of

of Egypt, to enſlave the nation to the king, and put their whole property into his hands, from having married into the family of one of them. Equally uncandid and groundleſs were his accuſations of *Moſes* on ſimilar ſuſpicions and ſurmiſes: for had he met with ſuch characters in Grecian ſtory he would not have ceaſed to applaud and admire them; the hebrew youth, as a moſt amiable pattern of filial piety, generous fraternal affection, and purity of manners; and the hebrew legiſlator, for his conſummate wiſdom, and for devoting himſelf and all his powers, without any ſelf-ſeeking, to the good of others.

Such haſty condemnation, in theſe and ſome other inſtances, he would not have ſuffered himſelf to paſs, if, without undue bias, he had calmly conſidered; that men choſen of God for important purpoſes, and therefore extraordinarily favoured by him, were not, nor was it neceſſary they ſhould be, faultleſs perſons; that in the infancy of a commonwealth, of a nature ſo peculiar as that of the hebrews, a harſher diſcipline might at firſt be needed: as for inſtance, in adjudging the man (Numb. xv.) that gathered ſticks on the

ſabbath to be ſtoned to death, to reſtrain and deter others from the violation of its laws in future, and in things of greater moment.

And with regard to the extermination of the idolatrous nations of Canaan, and the ſeverities and deſtruction accompanying it, which have been much exaggerated, and may hereafter be noted; may it not deſerve to be conſidered, whether in the inſtance of a general deſtruction injoined of innocent children with perſons grown up, ſuch proceedings might not be authorized by the righteous moral governor of the world, in mercy to the unfortunate ſufferers themſelves; whilſt in putting an end to the lives of his creatures, he put an end to the moſt horrid vice, (in which the young would have been trained, and others grown worſe) by continuing in which they would only have been more and more removed from, and with more difficulty recovered and brought back to virtue and to true happineſs.

Add to this, a moſt important conſideration, that ſuch temporary ſeverity tended immediately to deter and prevent the Iſraelites,

ites, and the nations around from becoming infected with and going on in ſuch practices, for which theſe people were doomed to ſuffer; I mean, the practices of a beſtiality not to be named; of the moſt defiling, promiſcuous commerce between the ſexes; and of that dreadful ſuperſtition which led them to make their children paſs through the fire to be conſumed in it, in honour of their falſe gods.

Had the pure, well-diſpoſed mind of Lord *Shaftſbury*, been ſufficiently unwarped to behold theſe things in their true light, he would have been far from imputing blame here; he who was penetrated with a full perſuaſion of the perfect unlimited goodneſs of the univerſal parent; and of the preſent, being only a beginning progreſſive ſtate of his rational offspring, for their improvement in virtue and happineſs for ever *.

However he might ſometimes affect to ſpeak lightly of the argument from miracles,

* See Lord Shaftſbury's Letters, p. 20. Mr. Martin's edition.

the only one that can fully prove to us a divine revelation, he ſometimes ſhewed that he underſtood and valued it, and would by no means be thought to reject it. In the *Characteriſticks*, Vol. II. p. 332, 333, 334, there is a fine paſſage to this purpoſe, the whole of which deſerves peruſal. The noble writer begins with eſtabliſhing, as he ſtyles it, "a juſt and rational foundation for our faith, on which we may give credit to a divine revelation; namely, when it comes recommended to us by the teſtimony of thoſe whoſe characters and lives might anſwer for them as to the truth of what they reported to us from God." And he then very properly remarks, that miracles of themſelves are proofs only of ſuperior power; and that we muſt be perſuaded that the power is under the direction of ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs; in ſhort, that there is a God, who by his wiſe and good providence appoints and governs all things, before we can rely on any miraculous communications from him; and then concludes in theſe words; "To whom therefore the Laws of this Univerſe and its Government appear juſt and uniform; to him they ſpeak the Government of one JUST

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ONE; to him they *reveal* and witneſs a God: and laying in him the foundation of this *firſt* Faith, they fit him for *a ſubſequent one.* He can then hearken to *Hiſtorical Revelation:* and is then fitted (and not till then) for the reception of any Meſſage or miraculous *Notice* from above; where he knows beforehand all is juſt and true. But this no power of Miracles, nor any Power beſides his *Reaſon*, can make him know or apprehend." He who writes in this ſort cannot juſtly be pronounced a rejector of all miracles, or diſbeliever of divine revelation.

It muſt not be omitted, that in the year 1710, Lord *Shaftſbury* having been informed by the young man whom he had educated for the miniſtry, at the univerſity of Oxford, that he had been very lately ordained by Dr. *Burnet*, Biſhop of Saliſbury; on receiving this letter, his patron, thus, among other things, writes back to him. "July 10th, 1710. I hope whatever advice the great and good biſhop gave you, will ſink deeply into your mind: and that your receiving *orders* from the hands of ſo worthy a prelate will be one of the circumſtances,

which may help to inſure your ſteadineſs in honeſty, good principles, moderation and true Chriſtianity."—— —— "As for my part of kindneſs and friendſhip to you, I ſhall be ſufficiently recompenſed, if you prove (as you have ever promiſed) a virtuous, pious, ſober, and ſtudious man, as becomes the ſolemn charge belonging to you."—— —— "The thorough knowlege you have had of me, and the direction of all my ſtudies and life to the promotion of religion, virtue and the good of mankind, will (I hope) be of ſome good example to you: at leaſt it will be a hindrance to your being ſeduced by *infamies* and *calumnies*; ſuch as are thrown upon the men called *moderate*, and in their ſtyle indifferent in religion, heterodox, and heretical."

"I pray God to bleſs you in your new function, with all the true virtue, humility, moderation, and meekneſs, which becomes it.

I am your hearty friend,

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It would now ſeem from theſe facts, and authorities laid together, that we muſt in all equity conclude, that this celebrated writer did not make the declarations we have ſeen in favour of chriſtianity with a view to deceive; that he was not acting a part, but was a real believer of that religion for which he uniformly profeſſed ſuch a high regard.

We cannot certainly decide that his free notions and ſarcaſtic raillery in which he indulged with reſpect ſome of the hiſtories in the Old Teſtament, amounted to an intire rejection of its divine authority: but this we may conclude, that his ſcepticiſm in this reſpect, whatever it was, did not appear to him incompatible with a ſincere belief and profeſſion of chriſtianity.

Nor are we to think otherwiſe of him, for the inſinuations he ſometimes throws out againſt the goſpel-morality, as being deficient in teaching the duties of friendſhip, of the love of liberty and of our country; objections which ſerve only to expoſe his learned vanity and ignorance: but it appears, as far as can be judged from his ſentiments and

conduct, that he was, and was desirous of passing for a christian; and also wished such a judgment to be formed of him by posterity.

We may then now perhaps be permitted to represent to ourselves the manner in which the author of the *Characteristicks*, would have been received by our divine master *Jesus*, if he had met with such a character in his walks through Judea. May we not image to ourselves, that after some heavy rebukes for his high self-conceit, and other grievous defects, bordering upon and springing from it, and after pointing out the necessity of the severe discipline to be exercised over his imagination which had sadly misled him, our Saviour would, in favour of his general disposition, and principles, have spoken kindly to him and encouraged him, with the words of hope and consolation, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God?*"

But it is high time to go on with our subject, though we have not wandered far, if at all, out of our way, in this long digression; for which we are much beholden to *Volusian*,

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as it has brought before us a moſt amiable and accompliſhed perſon, who thought, and who contributed to make others think, well of the world, and its maker, and therein is no ſmall encouragement to us.

It is then with great pleaſure, my friends, that I begin with noting, that as there is nothing, which we can poſſibly be more concerned to know, than that the power that made us, is benevolently diſpoſed to us, and to all his creatures, he has not been wanting in furniſhing us with a knowlege ſo neceſſary to our peace. For although we do not behold him with our bodily eyes, we can ſee in his works, and dealings with us, and with every living *creature*, how great and good he is. It may, indeed, be called the verdict and ſentiment of nature; becauſe in all ages, where any believed in God, they believed him to be good; ſeeing the marks of kind deſign every where, and in every thing, they could frame no other idea of the ſovereign Creator, than as intending the happineſs of the things he had made; not to receive any benefit himſelf, for he wanted not any thing; but to impart and communicate from his boundleſs

boundleſs ocean of goodneſs to all. And it is a fact of great notoriety, that what put men at firſt upon the thought of there being a powerful independent evil principle, was, their not being able otherwiſe ſatisfactorily to account to themſelves for the evil and miſery, which was in the world, and becauſe they were perſuaded, that nothing but good could come from God.

But this univerſal ſentiment and impreſſion concerning the deity being found among all his rational offspring, that he is of the moſt perfect goodneſs, though highly deſerving attention, as the genuine teſtimony which his works bear to the character of their author, does not prove him to be ſuch to the anxious inquiring mind, whilſt ſo many things ſeem to wear a contrary aſpect. That can only be made to appear by ſuch a reſearch and particular examination as will convince us, that all creatures are intended for happineſs, and put into the way of enjoying it.

Now wherever we turn our eyes, to the beaſts of the field, the birds of the air, the watery tribes, or the numberleſs inſect race,

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we ſee them chearful and happy, and their happineſs ſecured to them in a manner ſuited to their nature and conditions. It is moſt obvious, and mankind have very early noticed it, with regard to themſelves, as a mark of kind deſign in their maker, that the organs of their body, which are of chief moment for comfort and well-being, and of moſt conſtant uſe, are moſt ſtudiouſly guarded from injury, and advantageouſly placed; the eye elevated on high for the better diſcovery of objects; the ear likewiſe for the greater advantage of hearing; ſo likewiſe the organ of ſmelling near the mouth, for a guide in the choice of food. And the ſame kind attention and diſpoſition of theſe principal organs is obſervable in the infinite variety of the different ſpecies of the animal creation, accommodated to their form and way of life.

And as the world is God's Houſe, and all the living creatures in it, part of his family, carrying on their different works and buſineſs in it, for a limited ſeaſon: and as he intended a ſucceſſion of its inhabitants to be continued, he has therefore made proper proviſion for their propagation; and alſo for their comfortable

fortable ſupport; which is either put in their immediate poſſeſſion, when brought into life, or ſo placed within their reach, that by the eaſy uſe of their powers, it may be ſecured.

The utmoſt care is taken of all animals when young, and unable to provide for themſelves. This is generally done by their parents, eſpecially the mothers, who acquit themſelves therein with aſtoniſhing perſeverance, fidelity and tenderneſs, which naturaliſts can never enough admire; encountering the greateſt difficulties and dangers in the protection of them, and ſhewing the greateſt ſelf-denial in procuring them ſuſtenance. And it is ſo ordered, that their natural affection and care ceaſe, when there is no further call for them. Where this office is not performed by the parent, they are directed to lay their eggs, or produce their young, in places, where when born they inſtantly find their nouriſhment in the greateſt abundance.

All the different tribes of animals are furniſhed with their proper food, ſo as not to interfere with each other: and all know what

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is ſalutary for them by their ſeveral ſenſes, their food being made pleaſant and inviting to them. Innumerable are the benevolent contrivances of the author of nature for their accommodation in this reſpect. In thoſe ſeaſons of the year, when the food of ſome animals is not to be obtained in one country, they are found to traverſe land and ſeas, exactly at the proper ſeaſons, to procure it in another, and ſail through the air by a more certain intuitive guidance, than the mariner's compaſs. Others are ſo formed, that in winter, for inſtance, when their food is not to be obtained, they ſubſiſt without it, and live concealed in their retiring places, till ſpring approaches. Thoſe animals which are the moſt generally uſeful, are found in the greateſt number, and almoſt in all countries. And the more uncommon ones are to be ſeen only in thoſe climates and ſituations, where they are beſt provided for, and moſt uſeful and happy; as the Rhen-Deer in Lapland, and the Camel in the hot countries, bordering on the ſandy deſarts.

Nor is it any exception to the goodneſs of the creator, that many animals are made to prey

prey and feed upon one another. Ravenous beaſts, tigers, wolves, &c. are not numerous, are ſoon deſtroyed where the earth is inhabited and cultivated; and, in the mean time, they call forth men's active powers, are of uſe to prevent other animals from multiplying too faſt. Alſo, in general, they are only hurtful, when provoked by ſome injury, or ſtimulated by hunger. How often would the labour of the huſbandman be entirely fruſtrated in his expectations from ſowing his grain and ſeeds, if birds of prey did not live upon the maggots and worms, that infeſt the tender blade and bud? To prevent the like miſchievous effects, the wild boar and timid hare are deſtined to be hunted down and deſtroyed by other animals. The minuteſt flies and inſects furniſh food to the ſmaller birds, that enliven our atmoſphere by their notes and by their dexterity in their flights; and was not the vaſt multitude of theſe in ſome countries to be the nouriſhment of the feathered race, the aſtoniſhing ſwarms of them would, at times, darken the atmoſphere, and render life uncomfortable.

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But by this kind contrivance, and multiplication of living creatures an infinitely greater number enjoy exiſtence and are made happy by it, than would otherwiſe have taken place. And though it be very ſhort, they enjoy their little day of life, without any regret at parting with it, and make room thereby for others to ſucceed, and be happy in their turn. And with reſpect to thoſe tamer domeſtic animals, which mankind kill for their food, they become happier thereby from the extraordinary care taken of their health and nouriſhment. It is neceſſary, moreover, to deſtroy them, as, otherwiſe, the earth would be overrun and ſo filled by them, as not to yield ſufficient food for mankind. It is a ſtrict duty, however, for which all will be reſponſible, to put an end to their being in the eaſieſt and ſhorteſt way. And, as they have no preſentiment of what is to happen to them, the abridging of their lives is no injury, as they ſuffer leſs by this premature death, than by dying of diſeaſe and old age.

The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reaſon, would he ſkip and play?

Pleas'd

Pleas'd to the laſt, he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand juſt rais'd to ſhed his blood.
Oh! blindneſs to the future, kindly given,
That each may fill the circle, mark'd by heav'n!
Eſſay on Man. Ep. i.

We, alſo, as partakers of the ſame nature with our fellow-animals around us, have our full ſhare, as ſuch, in the kindneſs and care of the common Creator. His goodneſs meets us at our birth, and provides for us in our firſt helpleſs ſtate. He has contrived all the objects of our ſeveral ſenſes to be pleaſing to us, indicating thereby that he intends us to be gratified by them.

Pleaſure is, indeed, our natural feeling, accompanying the application and exerciſe of all our powers, and diſcovering itſelf moſt remarkably, as has been obſerved, in the playful diſpoſition of young children; which, when there is no reaſon againſt it, ought ever to be indulged.

Nor is it any mark of unkindneſs or indifference towards us, in our Creator, that we

we are ſubject alſo to painful feelings, but the contrary; as they frequently ariſe from what would be hurtful to us, and put us upon avoiding it. The pains of hunger and thirſt, which are among the firſt we experience, and which continue through life, are not only conſtant ſources of delight to us, but are neceſſary to excite us to the care of our health and to labour, without which we ſhould be in danger of becoming torpid, uſeleſs, and miſerable.

Some of the acuteſt pains, to which we are expoſed, are evidently the accidental, not the natural effects of our frame. Diſeaſes, in general are an effort of the conſtitution, to relieve from ſomething, that would be prejudicial to us; for which providence, by the means of human induſtry and ingenuity, hath furniſhed us with many effectual remedies, and by the ſame induſtry and ingenuity of men more are daily diſcovered. And epidemical diſeaſes, by alarming men's fears, put them on more minute inveſtigation, in diligently ſtudying their cauſes, ſo as to prevent them in future, and more lives are preſerved.

Nor can we complain of a want of benevolence, in there being ſo many cauſes at hand continually of the deſtruction of us, as of other animals. For we and all animals were born to die. This is the condition of the preſent life. The manner of dying is in itſelf of little moment.

It is neceſſary to make room for others of our fellow-creatures after us, to act their parts, whatever be the deſign of placing us on the ſtage of this world; that as we have had our day and time of life, and finiſhed our parts, others may ſucceed and finiſh their's. And when, as ſometimes happens, in vaſtly greater numbers, the different actors are ſwept off the ſtage by earth-quakes, by war, peſtilence, and the like, the ſufferers themſelves have the leaſt reaſon of complaint, as the eaſieſt way of going out of the world is to be called out on the ſudden.

If this were to be the whole of our exiſtence, as it may be, for aught we know, of our fellow-animals, there would be no reaſon to murmur; but to be thankful, for having lived in this fair world, and enjoyed an over-

balance of happineſs in it. For that happineſs abounds, is plain from this, that mankind are univerſally fond of life, and cling to it with avidity to the laſt, to its very dregs: which would not be, were it not pleaſant to them. The very few who make away with themſelves, are not hurried on to it by any comparative view or feeling of the miſeries of life above its pleaſures or enjoyments; but, where the motive can be perceived, it is generally found to be ſome preſſing anxiety of the moment, which they have not the courage to reſiſt, whence they cowardly give way and fall under it.

It is moſt conſolatory, that we can thus attain full ſatisfaction concerning the happineſs of mankind and of all ſentient beings in the preſent ſtate, as we have thereby full evidence of the goodneſs, of the Power, that gave us our being, by its effects: for it might have left ſome ſuſpicion, that all was not fair and kind above, if we had been referred to an unknown, untried future ſtate for proof of the divine benevolence; as it might have ſuggeſted itſelf that we cannot but judge from what we feel and experience, and that if the

Deity had ſhewn himſelf leſs favourably diſpoſed to his creatures here, they could have little ground to expect it hereafter.

BUT, though ſo kindly dealt with in our animal capacity, in what relates only to our preſent life, thanks ever due be given to our great creator for that moſt important diſtinction, and mark of favour, which his kindneſs has farther beſtowed upon us; that we can contemplate ourſelves alſo as his creatures of an higher form; as rational and moral; capable of attaining the knowlege of him, the benevolent author of our being, and of recommending ourſelves to his favour by pious grateful acknowlegements and by obedience to his will, in doing good to others, as he does good to us and to all; which is the higheſt perfection and bliſs.

In this view of ourſelves, although we come out of his hands more helpleſs and deſtitute at firſt, than other animals, this is amply ſupplied by the appointed inſtruments of our birth.

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The mind, our diſtinguiſhing excellency, is at firſt a perfect blank, fitted and ready to receive whatever impreſſions may be made upon it; for which we are entirely dependent on thoſe about us, and the circumſtances, in which we are placed: which accounts for the infinite diverſity of characters that are in the world. Ever in action, which is the ſource of all our improvement, from our firſt coming into life, and in every ſtage of it, we are delighted in gaining continually new ideas, and powers, and knowlege of all kinds.

The ſeveral parts of our make, our appetites, paſſions, and affections, ſpring up gradually in us, as they are called forth, and their objects preſent themſelves; all of them in themſelves good and right, and neceſſary for our well-being and perfection, yet without due reſtraint and regulation, capable of being perverted, and of miſleading us; for which, Reaſon, the ruling faculty is given, to guide us to private and public good.

Wholly the creatures of aſſociation and habit, our characters are inſenſibly formed by the inſtruction, converſation, and example of

of thoſe we firſt mix with, and the things and ſcenes and perſons, to which we are accuſtomed, and among whom our lot is caſt.

And thus being from the firſt, and all along, the ſubjects of perpetual care and kindneſs and attention of parents and thoſe about us, our good affections are generated and excited: we are induced, we are prompted, we deſire, we feel it right, to be kind to others, as others have been kind to us, and take pleaſure in adding to their happineſs.

As we grow up our wants conſtrain us ſtill more to ſeek the aid and aſſiſtance of others, and our ſocial make inclining us not to live in ſolitude; prompted alſo by nature to unite ourſelves with a tender companion for life, a way is opened from the conſtruction of one family to the union of many families together, and the formation of larger communities for ſecurity, comfort, and advantageous intercourſe; and thence to the eſtabliſhment of government and laws; which when built up and upheld by principles of equal liberty and

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the general good, are fruitful of the greateſt bleſſings.

In the morning of life, at reaſon's earlieſt dawn, we are tranſported with the ſight of verdant fields, and lawns, and their various peaceful inhabitants grazing on them, with thoſe combinations of different objects, of hill and dale and groves, that preſent themſelves in beautiful landſchapes; heightened at the ſame time with the harmony and muſic furniſhed by the choriſters of the woods and ſky, rejoicing in their being, and calling upon us to join their ſong: the whole ſcenery together forcing upon the beholder, the joyous, venerable idea of a parent almighty Mind; a Power unſeen, of wiſdom and goodneſs without bounds, which framed, adjuſted, and preſerves the whole, worthy to be loved and adored by all; as *Blomefield*, in his artleſs numbers, happily deſcribes it,

> There his firſt thoughts to Nature's charms inclin'd,
> Which ſtamps devotion on th' inquiring mind.

And indeed by the uſe of reaſon, the light within us, every attentive mind may, from the view of his works, as well know that there

is a God, who made and governs the world; as he may know, by the uſe of his eyes and ſenſes, that there is a Sun, which enlightens the earth, and by its warmth cheriſhes the growth of vegetables, and ripens the corn and fruits.

This natural light moreover teaches us, that as we owe our exiſtence and all its bleſſings to our Maker's unmerited kindneſs and bounty, we ſhould be odious monſters were we ever to fail in the gratitude, reverence and obedience, ever due to one ſo much above us, who ſhews himſelf ſo intereſted for us and deſirous of our happineſs. And as the frame and conſtitution, which he, who giveth every thing to all, has beſtowed upon us, is alſo ſuch, that we cannot be happy ourſelves, without promoting to our power the happineſs of our fellow-creatures: theſe plain intimations within, and interwoven in our very frame, of gratitude and love to God, and affection to our fellow creatures, can be conſidered as none other than the voice of God within us; his *ſecret voice*, by which he calls to the ſons and daughters of men in all ages and countries, and teaches them their duty and

and the road to their happineſs; as once, by an *audible voice* at Mount Sinai, he delivered his ſolemn commands to one people.

Thus are thoſe primary duties of piety and benevolence engrafted in us, and proviſion is made for our happineſs as rational beings. This is the law written in the hearts of thoſe who have no written law to guide them. And thus has the cauſe of religion and virtue been kept up in the world, amongſt all the rational creatures of God, and the means of virtue and holineſs, of their preſent and future happineſs, afforded to all; not the ſame means and advantages to all, but ſufficient for every one who can attain to no other. For no more will be required of any, than the honeſt and faithful uſe and improvement of the talents and advantages given, be they more or fewer.

Photinus having ended, the company pauſed a while, abſorbed in involuntary ſilence and reflection on what he had brought together, on the ſupport and happineſs of all ſentient beings that we are acquainted with, from man down to the loweſt worm.

Marcellinus

Marcellinus ſtanding up, thanked him for furniſhing them with ſuch an exquiſite moral treat; "How natural," exclaimed he, "on ſuch a proſpect of the world we inhabit, for the pious mind to adopt thoſe ſtrains in which the Hebrew poets firſt led the way, inſpired by the ſublime ſubject, and called upon all nature to aſſiſt them in hymning and celebrating in their ſongs the common creator and benefactor:

"Not only the young and old, and thoſe of every age and claſs of the human race; but all the irrational tribes of thoſe who fill the air, and walk the earth, and creep on the ground, or that glide along the watery element; the different families of living creatures, who in their different ways ſhew themſelves, buſy and chearful and happy;

"And, not ſatisfied with this tribute, ſtill in bolder ſtrains they invoke the mountains and hills and plains, and every tree and ſhrub that grows, to contribute their ſhare of praiſe, for being made to afford ſhelter and delight to ſo many living beings, and for other numberleſs uſes;

Nay,

"Nay, they invite even ſummer and winter to join the general chorus of praiſe; the changing ſeaſons ſo neceſſary to the health of man and beaſt, the growth and preſervation of each herb and fruit-bearing tree, and to the ripening of the fruits of the earth, by which the whole is ſuſtained and filled with gladneſs."

And though theſe holy men were not ſuch deep philoſophers as we boaſt ourſelves to be, they hereby ſhewed that they had attained to the chief end of all true philoſophy, in having learned to read and trace out in his works the hand and kindneſs of the One Supreme, the benevolent creator, and divine artiſt.

From theſe few inſtances produced by you out of the inexhauſtible ſtore that remains behind, we are able with ſatisfaction to ſee that the creator loveth all his creatures, and has brought them all into life to beſtow upon them a happineſs ſuited to them.

But what ſtill more concerns us: You have pointed out, and enabled us to diſcern from what

what ſimple principles, and by what eaſy natural proceſſes, the rational, moral character is formed, and from primeval duſt and clay, whence we were firſt taken, becomes capable of riſing to ſome faint, though infinitely diſtant reſemblance of the all good, and all perfect being.

Yet I fear that this will be regarded merely as beautiful theory; and theſe fine capacities of the rational nature thought to be beſtowed in vain, and never likely to be brought to maturity, when we take a ſurvey of the world at large, and ſcan what mankind have been in all ages, and ſtill are, in a moral view. And I ſhould be led almoſt to deſpair, if you, *Photinus*, were not to continue to give us your kind help to explore what the momentous ſubject will produce.

At their next meeting, after talking for ſome time together upon indifferent matters, *Marcellinus* turned the diſcourſe, obſerving, that as *Photinus* had ſhewn to their intire ſatisfaction, that the animal creation below us, in all their infinite variety and gradations, moſt uſefully filled the places aſſigned them, and were happy therein as far as we could perceive and judge; and was going on to inveſtigate and aſcertain how far the ſame could be ſaid of the human race, he thought that to do full juſtice to the ſubject, it would be neceſſary to take in the hiſtory of the origin of mankind as delivered in our ſacred books; and as there were different opinions entertained about it, to have it in ſome meaſure ſettled among them, what credit was to be given to that moſt antient hiſtory of all others, how it is to be underſtood, and what is to be gathered from it. Concerning theſe points, that the adjuſting of them might not divert *Photinus* from purſuing his main ſubject, he ſhould take the liberty to ſubmit his own ſentiments to them, which he had reaſon to believe were not much different from their own, as it was a matter that had often fallen in their way.

Now

Now it ſeemed to be generally allowed, by thoſe who had ſearched into, and were beſt qualified to form a right judgment concerning the coſmogony recorded in the entrance of the book of Geneſis, that the account of things therein given had been handed down to *Moſes* from the firſt parents of mankind, through the channel of *Noah* and his deſcendants; which, from the longevity of mankind at that period would not need to paſs through many hands; and their high importance would ſecure diligence and fidelity in the conveyance.

In the firſt three chapters of the book, we have the moſt momentous documents and information concerning the one true God, and ſole creator of all things, his character, and that of his creature, man. We there learn, what we might preſume to be the fact, that mankind were not left to themſelves, to the inveſtigations of reaſon, to ſpell out and acquire the knowlege of the Being that made them, and of their duty to him; which, though attainable by their natural powers, would have been a matter of very ſlow operation and accompliſhment; but that they received

ceived this knowlege directly from God himſelf; deriving from the ſame ſource at the ſame time, the knowlege of language neceſſary for their intercourſe with each other and with their Maker. From the facts, and circumſtances of the narrative we have the moſt probable grounds on which to build theſe concluſions. But how this knowlege of a primitive language was inſtilled or acquired, it is needleſs to aſk, as it ſeems impoſſible to find out.

And although men have differed, and will continue to differ, in their interpretations of the language and dreſs, in which theſe important truths are clothed and conveyed; namely, what is called the tree of the knowlege of good and evil; the tree of life: the ſerpent's temptation, and his converſation with *Eve*; her eating of the forbidden fruit at his inſtigation, and giving it to *Adam* to eat, and the ſentence paſſed upon the ſeveral offenders by their creator and judge: much of it undoubtedly couched in allegory and figurative expreſſion; as alſo literally to be taken in other parts, which are at the foundation; (ſee the reference to it, Mark x. 5, 6.)

yet

yet the moral inſtruction intended to be conveyed by the whole is not difficult to be underſtood, and, in this there has been a very general harmony and concurrence. That, for inſtance, there is one God, the maker of all things, and father of mankind, who formed them in his own image, their moral governour, and judge; who is deſirous of their happineſs, which can only be attained by their obſervance of the laws he has made known to them as a rule for their conduct, annexing rewards to their obedience, and threatening with puniſhment their tranſgreſſions.

I ſhall only add, that, not far from the entrance of Mr. *Locke*'s "Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity as delivered in the Scriptures," is a ſpecimen of the manner in which that judicious perſon was wont to interpret for himſelf the hiſtory of the fall of our firſt parents, which, I have no doubt, you think with me worthy of attention.

When *Marcellinus* had finiſhed, *Photinus* immediately riſing up, remarked, that he had not any doubt of their being all much ſatisfied

fied with what had been now ſuggeſted concerning this moſt intereſting narrative of the remoteſt antiquity. For his part, he could not but declare and acknowlege, that it would relieve him much in the taſk their partiality had impoſed on him, to have ſuch a foundation to proceed upon. With their leave then, he would begin, and remind them; that having already ſhewn, that man had a moral nature, in diſtinction from the animals around him, by which he was fitted for the ſupreme happineſs, ariſing from the knowlege and worſhip of God, the ſovereign all-perfect Being, and from a reſemblance to him in goodneſs; they were now to inquire whether man attains that happineſs? and what his hiſtory teaches us in this reſpect?

In the Bible, the oldeſt and moſt authentic hiſtory of the world and of the human race, as far as it goes, we find our firſt parents placed originally in a moſt happy ſtation, where obedience to their kind creator, in obſerving his laws, injoined only for their good, was their eaſy duty. But they ungratefully failed in it; and as they were forewarned,

paid the penalty of their tranſgreſſion; and, though not particularly informed of it, we may not doubt of their puniſhment having its intended effect, in producing repentance and future obedience.

The marks of human frailty did not alas! ſtop with them. Dire ſelfiſh paſſions ſoon crept into their ſmall family, and prompted their eldeſt ſon, the monſter *Cain*, through envy, to take away the life of his more pious, virtuous brother. But fell remorſe and miſery ſpeedily overtook him for the atrocious act. And the ſhock it would give to all that heard of it; and the leſſons upon it which our firſt parents would not fail to read, of the fatal effects of headſtrong ungoverned paſſion, would contribute to contain others in their duty, and be remembered for good.

Of *Enoch*, one of the deſcendants of *Adam* before the flood, it is recorded, Gen. v. 24. that he *walked with God*, i. e. was one highly approved by him; *and was not*; *for God took him*. The phraſe, *was not*, in itſelf implies, that *he died*, ceaſed to exiſt: but as explained by what follows, *for God took him*,

it

it here denotes, that he was removed out of the world without dying. For ſo the word is rendered, Gen. v. 24. by the greek tranſlators: where alſo, in the original hebrew, the ſame term is uſed, which is afterwards in 2 Kings ii. 3. in ſpeaking of Elijah being taken up alive into heaven. And this ſenſe is confirmed by the apoſtle, *Hebrews* xi. v. *By faith* Enoch *was tranſlated, that he ſhould not ſee death; and was not found, becauſe God had tranſlated him: for before his tranſlation he had this teſtimony that he pleaſed God.*

This ſtriking event was an abſolute aſſurance to the antediluvians of a life after this, which could not fail of making the deepeſt impreſſions upon them; and its taking place at this early period would be of infinite ſervice in teaching them, that the virtuous and good, living and dying, were the peculiar care of heaven.

Very little is preſerved to us concerning the generations of mankind before the flood. But we may preſume from the circumſtances of trial and difficulty in which human crea-

tures are all placed, and their general behaviour under them, that there would always be a mixture of characters, good and bad, more or leſs at different times. For a while, the good would prevail, till by degrees they fell away, and others leſs virtuous and regular ſucceeded, and at length wickedneſs and violence, we learn, roſe to ſuch a height, that the almighty and merciful Being judged it expedient to deſtroy the whole race of men from off the earth, all, except one righteous man and his family.

This moſt awful judicial act however of his moral government was not executed without giving them warning of his deſign, and trying to reclaim and amend them. For we are informed in our ſacred books, that for very many years *Noah* had a divine commiſſion to warn that evil generation of the juſt judgements impending over them, and to labour to bring them off from their pernicious courſes. Some, we may not doubt, would be wrought upon ſo as to have their evil diſpoſitions changed and turned to God and goodneſs, whether by the pious remonſtrances of *Noah* alone, or of others joined with him; although

although it was not poſſible to ſtem the torrent of wickedneſs, which by the decrees of heaven brought on the deſtruction of that incorrigible race. Yet we cannot refrain from remarking, how in the midſt of judgement the Almighty remembered mercy, in ſweeping them away at once by a death the moſt eaſy of all others.

Thus did they ſuffer for their extreme wickedneſs, and violation of the divine commands; and became the means of exalting the virtue of thoſe, who affectionately and earneſtly ſtrove, though in vain, to bring them to virtue and an obedience to the divine will.

It has not pleaſed the Divine Wiſdom to gratify us with many things that we might have wiſhed to know concerning *Noah*, the ſecond father of our race: He that had ſeen the whole ſpecies cut off for their ſins, and his family alone ſpared. How powerful and affecting ſo long as he lived muſt have been his teſtimony of the one true God and Maker

of all things; of his goodneſs in bringing creatures into life to make them happy by an obedience to his laws; his juſt abhorrence of all ſin and wickedneſs. This knowlege he would be careful to inculcate on his children and his children's children in a long ſucceſſion. And that there was ſuch important knowlege derived from this ſource and circulated through all nations, is manifeſt from the accounts of the ſtate of the world which are preſerved to us.

After the flood, the repeopling of the earth would be promoted by different families originating from Noah and his ſons, which carried with them in their diſperſions, theſe great truths.

It is a noble atteſtation to the truth of the Moſaic hiſtory which is given by *Sir Iſaac Newton*, in his "Chronology of antient Kingdoms amended," by ſhewing its agreement with the actual ſtate of the world and condition of its inhabitants, as exhibited in the imperfect accounts of them handed down to us. He thence obſerves, p. 188, "that the worſhip of the true God continued to the time

time of *Abraham* and *Melchizedek*, and that it was not till their days, that men fell away to the worſhip of falſe gods, which were probably the heavenly hoſt, the ſun, moon and ſtars; and that it was to avoid this, which then began in Chaldea, and ſpread from thence, but had not yet reached the land of Canaan, that *Abraham* left Ur of the Chaldeans, to go by Haran into the land of Canaan, being called out by divine providence from among his kindred, who were beginning to be infected with it; and this great author concludes the firſt chapter of his diligent and exact ſearch into the Scriptures and antiquity, with this general deduction, p. 190. " So then, *the believing that the world was framed by one ſupreme God, and is governed by him; and the loving and worſhipping him, and honouring our parents, and loving our neighbours as ourſelves, and being merciful even to brute beaſts*, is the oldeſt of all religions. He had juſt before called this, *the primitive religion of jews and chriſtians; which*, adds he, *ought to be the ſtanding religion of all nations, it being for the honour of God and the good of mankind.*

Hardly throughout all antiquity ſhall we find a more dignified and accompliſhed perſon than *Abraham*; of great wiſdom and integrity; of a generous independent ſpirit, and true fortitude; famed over all the Eaſt for his virtues, and diſtinguiſhed as a worſhipper of the one true God, in which he carefully inſtructed his family and dependents; and in thoſe days his known and avowed principles and example muſt have been of ſervice in diſcountenancing and reſtraining men from the worſhip of falſe gods, which was then beginning to be ſet up; and the more, as his travelling into different countries would cauſe him to be much inquired after and known.

Much to be noted is the account given by the ſacred hiſtorian of *Abraham*'s interceſſion with the Divine Being in behalf of the ſinful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. This moſt probably paſſed in viſion, whilſt he was praying; (the like to which is recorded, in later times, of the devout roman centurion, and of the apoſtle *Peter*, Acts x.) for juſt before it happened, Gen. xviii. 22. it is ſaid, *Abraham* ſtood before God, i. e. was praying to

to him, as the phraſe is underſtood by the beſt interpreters.

How edifying this firſt repreſentation that is handed down to us, in the annals of the world, of a creature admitted to converſe by prayer with his creator! and what a pattern of devotion to us even in theſe enlightened times! *Abraham* requeſts nothing for himſelf, but with profound humility, moved by a benevolent concern for the moſt horrible crimes of his fellow creatures, he, by various arguments in their behalf, pleads for their being ſaved from impending deſtruction, that they might have ſpace to repent. Whilſt on the other hand, with infinite condeſcenſion and kindneſs, the Almighty liſtens and replies to his pleas, convincing him, that had not their diſpoſitions been turned to evil beyond a poſſibility of being changed by any ordinary means, his prayer would have been granted and they would have been ſpared.

With regard to the particular ſin of the inhabitants of thoſe cities, for which the divine

divine judgments were ready to fall on them, and which this pious good man prayed might be averted; it is a crime which beſpeaks the higheſt depravity, if not a total moral inſenſibility and alienation of mind from God and goodneſs. And it is probable that ſuch an early declaration from heaven againſt it, in the deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrha by fire, the traces of which remain unto this day, diſplayed in ſo tremendous a manner before *Abraham* and his family; with the ſevere ſtigma and condemnation paſſed upon all ſuch crimes afterwards, in the law of *Moſes*: theſe circumſtances, all together, fixed and left ſuch a deep indelible impreſſion and horror upon the minds of his choſen race, as have been the means of preſerving them at all times from ſuch unnatural debaſing vice. For we never find their prophets, in the long catalogue of their crimes, laying this particularly to their charge. And in their diſperſion into other countries, foretold by their prophets, whilſt the heathens among whom they ſojourned were many of them, infamous for it, the greeks and romans in their moſt poliſhed and improved ſtate by

no

no means excepted; and the followers of *Mahomet* horribly guilty, the nation of the jews has in general been unpolluted with it.

Of *Lot*, the nephew of *Abraham*, it is recorded, 2 Peter ii. 6, 7, 8. that he was filled with deep concern for the extreme wickedneſs of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, a mark of a truly virtuous mind, to be concerned for God and his holy laws, and the happineſs of his fellow-creatures in their obedience to them. But concerning theſe diſtinguiſhed perſons, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and ſome other worthy characters among the anceſtors of the Iſraelites in thoſe early ages, there are unqueſtionably ſome things recorded which are by no means to their credit, or to be imitated by us: a circumſtance which does honour to the ſacred hiſtorian, ſhewing him to be actuated by a regard to truth only in what he related, and reſolved to tell things as they really happened, however it might make againſt ſome of the moſt favourite characters of his nation.

Of

Of *Moſes* the divine lawgiver of the Iſraelites, and his early preference of virtue and obedience to God to the higheſt worldly dignities and enjoyment, we have an important teſtimony, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26, confirmed by every thing we know concerning him. From the time that he had a divine call to deliver his countrymen out of bondage in Egypt, and to ſettle them in the land of Canaan, he led a life of inceſſant toil, and anxiety, and contradiction, in having to ſtruggle with their low baſe minds, and obſtinate untractable tempers, which their long ſlavery had generated and rivetted in them; by which his patience and magnanimity were called forth and exerciſed; devoting himſelf and all his powers to bring them off from this ſlavery of vice and evil paſſions, the worſt of all others: for which he had no reward to look for in this world, but the ſatisfaction of doing them good and approving himſelf to God.

His wiſdom and virtues we find were known and revered far and near among the gentiles; and the excellent laws which he laid down for his people, taught and excited many

many in different countries to honour the true God, and to be ſerviceable to their fellow creatures in bringing them from a rude and ſavage and immoral life to a ſubjection to laws for the public good.

No one can riſe up from peruſing the hiſtory of his life and times, as given us by himſelf; the admirable laws and inſtitutions he preſcribed, to teach the Iſraelites the knowlege and worſhip of Jehovan, the one true God, and of him alone; the laws for their living together in ſociety, and promoting their mutual happineſs, with the mighty works he was enabled to do in Egypt for the eſtabliſhment of his divine miſſion, and for the emancipation of his countrymen, and to preſerve them afterwards in their duty and obedience; without ſeeing throughout the extraordinary hand and leading of God.

And it is againſt all credibility, that one, governed by ſuch excellent principles; exhibiting in all his actions ſuch an example of true piety and goodneſs; ſuggeſting continually to his countrymen the great things God had done for them, appealing to them frequently

quently at the time, and upon the very ſpot, and exhorting them to gratitude and obedience on that account; ſhould be under a deluſion himſelf, or ſhould in all this be acting a part and deceiving them. The mind revolts at the ſuppoſition: An unperverted underſtanding can need no other proof that *Moſes* had a commiſſion and authority from God to teach and to act as he did.

And in the ſame way of argument, it was not in the nature of things, if human beings were the ſame then as now, that the Iſraelites ſhould be perſuaded of their being delivered out of Egypt by a miraculous interpoſition from heaven in their favour, and of their being ſupported afterwards by the divine power in the wilderneſs; ſhould continue to be aſſiſted in the ſame extraordinary way in overcoming their enemies, by walls of defence (Joſhua vi. 20, 21.) falling down before them; by rivers dividing (Joſhua iii. 5, *to the end*) to make way for their paſſing them; that theſe and the like miraculous events in their favour ſhould be the theme of their ſacred ſongs and public hymns of thankſgiving to God their almighty deliverer at the

the time and ever after to this hour, and yet never to have really taken place, but to have been a maſs of prieſtly and political contrivance; in which the whole nation combined or were impoſed on, till in theſe later ages the impoſition was diſcovered.

Aſſuredly thoſe perſons are true objects of pity, who through ſome unfortunate bias on their minds, are led to reject an hiſtory of facts ſo well authenticated as thoſe which have *Moſes* for their author; which, beſides this moſt cogent internal proof now produced, is ſupported by all the external evidence which can reaſonably be required; for which *Grotius*, and others may be conſulted by all who are competent to make the reſearch.

One is the more concerned for this incredulity, becauſe the rejection of the important truths conveyed in theſe books, moſt commonly ſprings from a fixed determination not to admit any accounts, however well atteſted, of divine extraordinary communications and revelations to mankind; by which they deprive themſelves of the unſpeakable ſatis-

ſatisfaction thereby afforded, that the world and all things in it, eſpecially the moral world, have been from the firſt and are under the ſpecial government and direction of its creator; who appoints the different and ſucceſſive advantages of light and knowlege, and means of virtuous improvement.

Indeed where any one, for inſtance, is perſuaded, that *Moſes* in his hiſtory aſcribes to the Almighty what is inconſiſtent with his attributes of juſtice and goodneſs; or introduces him as injoining or giving encouragement to any thing vicious or immoral, or that is injurious to their fellow-creatures; ſo long as he remains under this perſuaſion, and cannot be brought to ſee his error by the arguments laid before him, you can only be ſorry for him, and wiſh him a mind more teachable and better informed.

With regard to the extermination of the Canaanitiſh nations, the great ſtumbling-block of the day, and objection to the reception of *Moſes* as a divine prophet and law-giver; and the particular command given by him not to ſpare infant children where a general deſtruction

ſtruction was to take place; it ſeems not to be needed to ſkreen and juſtify it by a reference to the ſame thing taking place in the divine natural government, where whole diſtricts, infants and grown perſons are promiſcuouſly deſtroyed by earthquakes and the like; as this is a defence, which ſome are diſſatisfied with, not holding the caſes to be parallel. It was a ſufficient juſtification for the thing, that there was the divine command for it; ſufficient for all, who believe in a God of all perfection and goodneſs, the moral governor of his creatures, and we can have no diſpute with any others: for he can command nothing but what is beneficial and good to all, even to thoſe who at preſent ſuffer by it. It is only neceſſary to be ſatisfied that it is his command, and we are to obey.

Now we have ſeen above, that there can be no ground to queſtion the veracity of *Moſes*, in what he ſo frequently declares, that it was the command of God to the Iſraelites by him, to exterminate thoſe nations and take poſſeſſion of their land, for that moſt important reaſon ſo often aſſigned, *leſt they make thee ſin againſt me.*

The Iſraelites alſo, beſides the command of God given them by *Moſes*, were further aſſured, from the divine extraordinary aſſiſtance vouchſafed to them in overcoming the Canaanites, that they acted by a divine command in invading and taking poſſeſſion of the country; in which, without expreſs encouragement from the Almighty, they would have been no better than robbers and murderers.

The Canaanites themſelves alſo had notice and warning given them of what was coming upon them, and for what cauſe; which is plain from what *Rahab* the hoſteſs related to the ſpies whom ſhe had concealed, Joſhua ii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. and what the Gibeonites afterwards declare to *Joſhua*, ix. 3, &c. ſo that the body of the people were perſuaded that the Iſraelites came againſt them by a commiſſion from the ſupreme God and poſſeſſor of heaven and earth; who in acting by his authority, violated no law of nature, nor did any injury to the Canaanites in diſpoſſeſſing them.

The

The ſeverity however of theſe awful judgments upon theſe nations, for their extreme wickedneſs, of which the Iſraelites were made the inſtruments, was not in that degree, or to that extent which has been ſuppoſed. This has been maintained with great ſtrength of argument, by learned and impartial judges; *Maimonides* and others of the firſt account among the jews; and by very many chriſtians of our own and other countries, in particular by *Grotius*, who, on Deut. xx. 10, maintains that the law Exod. xxiii. 31, 32, 33, and Deut. vii. 1, 2, was to be extended only to ſuch of theſe people as did not ſurrender themſelves on being ſummoned; as is evident from Joſhua xi. 19, 20. Their being commanded to ſave alive nothing that breatheth, Deut. xx. 16, is to be underſtood only in caſe they did not ſurrender when ſummoned, but rejected the conditions of peace offered to them.

But perhaps with regard to that extreme inhumanity and barbarity which is imputed to the Iſraelites, and ſuppoſed to be injoined by Almighty God to be exerciſed upon the Canaanites to their utter extermination, the

beſt refutation, is the fact itſelf, that they were by no means all deſtroyed or exterminated: but were left and continued to dwell among the Iſraelites under their judges and their kings, even *David* himſelf; who certainly would not have permitted what was directly forbidden by God.

It is ever to be remembered, that it was not merely for their idolatry, though that alone be often named; but as it was connected with moſt abominable impure as well as inhuman rites, which made a part of it, and with which it was always accompanied, that theſe nations of Canaan were to be exterminated. For it is not for his own ſake that the Almighty requires or declares himſelf to have pleaſure in our religious worſhip and homage of himſelf alone and of no other beſides him; but becauſe it is neceſſary for our own perfection and happineſs, and to keep us from falling into the groſſeſt ignorance, bigotry and ſuperſtition, and moſt cruel malignant diſpoſitions to our fellow-creatures *.

* See, in many parts of it, that laſt and moſt invaluable work, his *Compariſon of the Inſtitutions of Moſes with thoſe of the Hindoos*, of my moſt beloved friend, Dr.

The expedience and need of this great ſeverity againſt the idolatry of the Canaanites, to check and prevent its ſpreading, appeared from the proneneſs of the Iſraelites, and their continual relapſing into it under their judges and their kings, till their captivity in Babylon. And the honeſt, unflattering account which their hiſtorians throughout give of their criminality in this reſpect, is a proof of the genuineneſs of their narratives, which muſt be agreeable to all lovers of truth, though they will lament the horrid degeneracy which they deſcribe. But in the midſt of it, in the worſt times, there were many thouſands who did not bow the knee to Baal; and even ſome of their princes had the virtue and the courage to attempt a reformation; and not a few among their prophets fell a ſacrifice to their boldneſs and efforts to bring their countrymen off from their abominable vice and worſhip of their falſe Gods, Heb. xi. 36—38.

Dr. Prieſtley. Although now far ſeparated during this tranſitory life, on the verge of which we both ſtand, there is humble hope of meeting again when the ſleep of death is over. His numerous works will continue to enlighten the world, till the only true God be more univerſally known; and the pure goſpel of Jeſus, his meſſenger, have its natural influence.

During the many ages, whilſt the Iſraelites were acting, ſome worthily, others much the contrary, under their greater light and advantages; among the reſt of the nations, thoſe eſpecially who dwelt neareſt and had intercourſe with them, enjoyed the means of becoming acquainted with the knowlege of the one true God; and muſt have benefited much by it, and alſo by obſerving the puniſhments which this people of God drew on themſelves, by falling off to the impure rites and worſhip of falſe gods: and under their diſpenſation, and with their leſſer light, many wiſe and excellent characters were formed, who laboured to do good and improve others.

Among theſe heathens there might be, and certainly there were, many diſtinguiſhed patterns of excellence, who were bleſſings to mankind, although they met with no hiſtorian to hand down their merits and example to thoſe that came after them. But we have undoubted records of one perſon, who ſhewed by his moral and intellectual acquirements, how far the light of nature could go, and what philoſophy was able to effect. And it may ſerve to humble, and to ſhame us into a better

a better conduct, to reflect how far we fall ſhort of his attainments, and creep below him in moral excellence, many of us, in the midſt of our blaze of light and advantages from divine revelation.

This was *Socrates*, the ſon of *Sophroniſcus*, an Athenian ſtatuary, bred to his father's profeſſion, in which he practiſed for a while and excelled; but very ſoon applied himſelf wholly to the ſtudy of philoſophy, principally that branch hitherto little cultivated, which related to the knowlege of nature and its author, and the duties men owed to him and to one another: He thus ſtood forth at once the moſt extraordinary example the world had ever yet ſeen, of devoting himſelf, his time and talents to inſtruct his fellow-citizens, and reform their lives and manners; with great ſimplicity addreſſing himſelf to all he met with to do them good; ſeeking no benefit for himſelf, nor ever taking money of the numerous ſcholars who attended him, as did other philoſophers; contented to live in poor circumſtances the better to promote his virtuous purpoſes, when, had he not refuſed them, he might have enjoyed great riches.

In the midſt of all, he diſcharged the duties of a good citizen; in time of war with ſingular courage and humanity in defence of his country; and at other times filling the different offices he was called to in his turn, in the commonwealth, with fidelity to his truſt, and the moſt perfect diſintereſtedneſs.

His general manner was, with chearfulneſs and pleaſantry to join in converſation with thoſe that fell in his way, when by apt and eaſy queſtions, without oſtentation or pretences to ſuperior wiſdom he ſought to draw them forth, and lead them by degrees to the point he aimed at; which was to find out their own ignorance, and defects, and to correct them.

In this work, for which he believed himſelf to have a divine call, he was unwearied; and going on in the ſame virtuous train, through the courſe of a long life, in the midſt of obloquy and contradiction from many, but moſt highly revered and eſteemed by others, he was at laſt put to death moſt unjuſtly, on the accuſation of two of his fellow-citizens, whom he had exaſ-

exaſperated by the ſeverity of his rebukes. This however would not have taken place, had not envy of his ſuperior virtue, which they were afraid of, wrought upon his fellow-citizens and the people at large, to connive at ſuch vile and iniquitous proceedings.

It is a very humiliating conſideration, that in theſe moſt poliſhed times of Greece, when ſcience and philoſophy were at their higheſt ſummit, nothing effectual was done to diminiſh or put an end to the groſſeſt public idolatry, in the worſhip of gods, who had been men and women of infamous characters; but grave magiſtrates and philoſophers, even *Socrates* among the reſt, were ſeen promiſcuouſly frequenting their temples, and joining the common herd of their worſhippers. The indictment however, under which he ſuffered, may ſeem to imply the contrary. It was in this form. "*Socrates* violates the law in not believing the gods which the ſtate believes, but introduces other new gods. He violates likewiſe the law in corrupting the youth. The puniſhment death." And he certainly was not guiltleſs of this charge. For in his public

public lectures, and general intercourſe with his fellow-citizens, he frequently took occaſion to ſhew the abſurdity of the popular belief, in pointing to the ſcandalous hiſtories of their gods and goddeſſes, endeavouring to inſtil juſter ſentiments of the deity into their minds; to which his proſecutors, in their accuſation of him, plainly alluded: ſo that he unqueſtionably died a martyr to his zeal for virtue, and againſt the worſhip of falſe gods.

Here *Voluſian* interpoſing, begged leave to ſay, that he believed few venerated that incomparable perſon more than himſelf; but he was apprehenſive that ſo high a teſtimony of him as that juſt now given, would not eaſily paſs, unleſs ſome farther apology was made for him, for his appearing to diſſemble his better knowlege, and giving countenance, by frequenting it, to the worſhip of their gods, whoſe characters and examples he muſt have deteſted. It is a very ſevere ſentence, which a learned and worthy man* has

* *A Defence of a Diſcourſe on the Impoſſibility of proving a future State by the Light of Nature*; p. 100, 101. By Joſeph Hallet, junior. London, printed for Noon. 1731.

paſſed

paſſed upon him in this reſpect, where he obſerves, " It has been pleaded in behalf of *Socrates*, and other philoſophers, that though they have attended on the idolatrous worſhip in the heathen temples, they ſtill retained the knowlege and belief of the one true God, and perhaps worſhipped him in their cloſets and in their thoughts. If this be fact, proceeds the ſame author, then it muſt be ſuppoſed, that theſe are the very men whom the apoſtle ſpeaks of as *holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, i. e. impriſoning, ſuppreſſing and concealing in their own minds, in an unrighteous manner, that knowlege of the true God, to which they had attained by the contemplation of his works. *Againſt ſuch*, the apoſtle ſaith, *the wrath of God is revealed.* Rom. i. 18."

This was advanced in the heat of controverſy, which ſeldom allows us to judge with calmneſs and equity. It may be alleged however, in defence of the conduct of *Socrates*; that the worſhip of the one God and of none other beſides him, might not appear of that conſequence to him, which it moſt juſtly does to us chriſtians, and to the jews, who

have the benefit of divine Revelation. He might alſo think it better for his countrymen to have ſome religion, however corrupt, than to be wholly without any; and might hope, that his unceaſing labours to combat their errors and prejudices, and throw light into their minds, eſpecially thoſe of the riſing generation, and to guard them againſt ſuperſtition; would in time lead to purer ſentiments of God and religion; and that the ſeed he had taken ſuch pains to ſow, would come up and bear fruit.

But his principal defence muſt be reſted on this; that he did not uſe any compliances in the worſhip of the gods of the country, out of any mean views to his own intereſt, or ſafety, or from any other unworthy motive; but purely for the good of his fellow-citizens, the better to bring them to truth and virtue; which appeared by his calm fortitude and noble manner of voluntarily giving up his life at laſt, when he might eaſily have retained it; than which nothing equally edifying is to be found in all heathen antiquity.

In the interval that followed, during the bright days of Greece and Rome for the ſpace of 400 years, trial was made what was the utmoſt effect of that light which had been lent to mankind, whether as derived by tradition from our firſt parents; or when that grew faint and dim, what was farther ſtruck out by their natural powers and the improvements of ſcience to meliorate the condition and reform the manners of the human race, and lead them to virtue and the true knowlege of God.

What progreſs was made in theſe reſpects is to be gathered from the hiſtorians and writers that have come down to us, *Cicero* more eſpecially, who flouriſhed towards the cloſe of this period, and was the beſt man of thoſe trying times in which he lived, and the fineſt moral writer, as well as the moſt enlightened, before the world was illumined by the goſpel.

By him, and by all that had gone before him, who filled the firſt ſtations in their different commonwealths, and who wiſhed well to mankind, the character of *Socrates* was held

in the higheſt veneration and invariably commended; but no one had the courage to follow his example. The utmoſt reformation aimed at was the introduction of wiſer plans of government, for the preſervation of good order and the peace of ſociety. Nothing was done to put men upon attending to the inward principle of their actions, and amending their diſpoſitions, in which all true virtue conſiſts. Nothing could even be expected to be attempted of a public nature to recover men to the knowlege of the true God and their obedience to him, whilſt the public religion, every where, in all countries, conſiſted in the adoration of gods, who had been mortal men, guilty of great crimes and immoralities, and whoſe worſhip was carried on by rites and ceremonies of the moſt profligate nature, which decency forbids to name; and to which the bulk of the people in all countries were immoderately attached.

The ſeaſon now approached, when as *Paul* tells the Athenians, the maker and governor of all things, who had at no time failed to cheriſh

cheriſh and ſupport all his rational offspring, of which he was the common parent; having hitherto left the heathen world to themſelves and to the guidance of their natural powers and faculties, which ought in all reaſon to have led them to God and their duty to him, and to each other; did now in the councils of his ſovereign wiſdom, judge proper not to ſuffer them to go on any longer in their own ways, without warning them of their departure from their allegiance to him, and from their true happineſs. *The times of this ignorance,* ſays the apoſtle, ſtanding in the midſt of the court, where cognizance was taken of ſuch matters, *God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: becauſe he hath fixed a day in the which he will judge the world according to juſtice, by a man whom he hath appointed; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Acts xvii. 30, 31.

A new æra was now to commence among the rational creatures of God, to all of whom, every where, this his ſolemn decree and command was to be made known by the preaching of the goſpel.

Men were not now to reſt in any leſſer attainments in virtue; but to aim at the higheſt excellency, a reſemblance in goodneſs to the Divine Being himſelf. For this is what the great teacher lays down, and which he exemplified in all his actions; a finiſhed pattern of piety and goodneſs in a creature, beyond which our higheſt ideas cannot go. Matth. v. 44, 45. *I ſay unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt.* When he immediately adds; *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye to expect? Do not even the publicans the ſame? and if ye ſalute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans ſo?* as though he had ſaid; The moſt ſelfiſh will take pains to do good, and to ſerve others, whilſt they find their preſent account and advantage in it. But a different conduct was required, a more ſublime morality was preſcribed to his followers. Whatever ſuffering or injurious uſage they might meet with

with from others, they were not to be hindered thereby from doing them all the good in their power; and they were to make it their buſineſs to promote the virtue, the preſent and future happineſs of their fellow-creature, at the riſque of their own eaſe and comfort, and even, when duty called them, of life itſelf.

Efforts like theſe, according to their different ſituations, opportunities, and abilities, are indiſpenſably bound upon all chriſtians, without exception. This was the new doctrine promulged from heaven, holding forth the ſupreme love of God the common creator and benefactor, manifeſting itſelf in the love of their fellow-creatures, and ſeeking their good as their own, as the ſum and ſubſtance of all human duty and of all true religion, and leading to the higheſt perfection and happineſs.

Moſt conſpicuous were the happy effects of the goſpel at firſt, in reforming the lives of thoſe in every country who received it: And if mankind had been contented with it, as delivered by its firſt great teacher, it is not

too much to ſay, that long before this day, the whole world would have been won over to embrace it. But when it became perverted from its genuine ſimplicity; and to proſelyte men to the belief of certain opinions was held the chief point, and not to convert them from vice to virtue and a good life, it ſoon began to loſe its ſalutary efficacy upon the minds of men; and though multitudes continued to be added to the number of its profeſſors, they did not become better men in practice.

Endleſs diſputes and quarrels about their ſeveral ſuperſtitious notions, and inventions in religion, grafted on the goſpel, ſoon filled them with rancour and implacable animoſities againſt each other, which often proceeded to bloodſhed; and they loſt what was moſt valuable in religion, their charity towards each other, whilſt contending for ſhadows. And in the courſe of a few centuries, and at the beginning of the ſeventh, chriſtians were become not only moſt horridly depraved in moral practice, and ſunk into the moſt abject ſuperſtition; but had multiplied to themſelves ſo many different objects of worſhip, the

mother of Chriſt and other dead perſons, called Saints, male and female; a trinity of three perſons in God, inſtead of the ſingle perſon of the God and father of the univerſe, the God and father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt and of all mankind; that to preſerve this moſt important doctrine from being overwhelmed and loſt in *chriſtian* idolatry, as alſo to puniſh chriſtians for their neglect and abuſe of the ſuperior light they enjoyed, the divine providence ſeems to have permitted the Arabian impoſtor *Mohammed* to ſucceed in his ambitious deſigns, and in ſpreading his new religion over a great part of the globe. This new religion he profeſſed to build upon the foundation of the Divine Unity, as taught by *Moſes*, and by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which was, as he too juſtly maintained, intirely corrupted and abandoned by the followers of the latter. And ſome reſpectable hiſtorians, who are diſpoſed to be candid towards this extraordinary perſon, relate; that he at firſt ſet out under ſerious impreſſions, and ſincere concern of mind at the prevalence of idolatry among his countrymen the Arabians, as well as the chriſtians univerſally.

That he ſhould afterwards take ſuch a horrible way to put down idolatry, and to propagate the knowlege and worſhip of one God only, by the ſword and utter deſtruction, where any refuſed or heſitated to embrace his new religion when propoſed to them, was to proclaim immediately the falſehood of his own pretenſions to be a prophet from God, to all who had any right diſcernment what God is. For it is impoſſible that a Being, in whom dwelleth the moſt perfect truth and goodneſs, can be pleaſed with, or approve the compelling of his miſtaken and misjudging creatures to abandon their errors concerning himſelf by outward force and intimidation; for theſe can only produce a feigned aſſent, and not real conviction which can alone be brought about by argument and perſuaſion.

Moſt unhappy have been the effects of this violence againſt their fellow creatures on account of differences in religion, this intolerant and anathematizing ſpirit againſt chriſtians as idolaters, taught and enjoined by this falſe prophet to his followers. Thus planted and rooted in them, as a principal part

part of their religion, it has from the firſt, inſpired them every where, who are computed to make one third at leaſt of the habitable world, with the moſt bitter hatred and enmity to all that bear the name of *chriſtian*, conſidering them as idolaters, and hated of God; ſo as in general even to refuſe them the common offices of humanity on that account, and to afford them no better appellation than that of *dogs*, and treat them with all manner of indignity, where they have no further power to hurt them. Of which temper, at this very day, Mr. *Mungo Park* has lately given us ſome curious facts.

For many long ages after *Mohammed*, his ſucceſſors, by the furiouſneſs of their zeal to propagate his religion and put down idolatry, were the inſtruments of providence in inflicting the moſt dreadful calamities upon chriſtians, which were obſerved to fall on thoſe countries, where the groſſeſt corruptions of religion had prevailed; in Greece and in the Eaſtern parts of the roman empire; and in the progreſs of their arms and ſucceſs, they ſeized and poſſeſſed themſelves of many of the countries they conquered. So that in

the councils of heaven, and according to the methods of the divine government, by which nations as well as individuals, are often obſerved to be deprived of the light and advantages which they ſlight and miſuſe; theſe fierce invaders were permitted nearly to extinguiſh the light of the goſpel, in many places where it had been ſucceſsfully preached and planted by the apoſtles of Chriſt; and ſtrove to eſtabliſh by force the doctrine of their falſe prophet in its room; where among thoſe of them who unhappily embraced it, it remains to this day, in all the darkneſs, imbecility, narrowneſs and cruelty, which ſuch intolerance in religion naturally engenders, and in which it muſt ever terminate.

Photinus here pauſing a little, *Voluſian*, with ſome emotion ſtarted up, crying out; what ſhall we ſay, *Photinus*, to the ſyſtem of religion, which you have been exhibiting, pretending to come from God, when it's firſt article is a direct violation of the laws of nature and of God, in compelling by force to acknowlege and worſhip him.

Aſſuredly

Aſſuredly theſe horrible effects ſhew the pretended prophet who teaches ſuch a doctrine, not to be of God, but *the angel of the bottomleſs pit*, of the infernal regions, as *Mohammed* and his ſucceſſors are deſcribed, Revelation ix. 11.

Behold here the fatal conſequences of forcing the conſciences of men. So far from being of ſervice in bringing them to piety and virtue and a due reverence for and obedience to that Almighty Being, the one only God, for whoſe honour *Mohammed* and his followers profeſs to be particularly zealous and concerned, we may appeal to the experience and teſtimony of twelve hundred years (for ſo long this religion has been widely ſpread and eſtabliſhed) whether it's numerous converts, inſtead of becoming wiſer, and better, and happier thereby in any degree, have not been made far worſe in all theſe reſpects, and at ſome times, and in ſome places, more abominably vicious and addicted to the vileſt paſſions, and lying heavier upon the peace and happineſs of their fellow creatures, and more hoſtile and cruel towards them, than if they had been without any religion, or belief of God at all.

Yet it becomes not chriſtians to condemn *Mohammedans* for their intolerance and cruelty, in forcing the conſciences of other men, or to fling the firſt ſtone at them on that account. For the ſpirit of domination over the minds and conſciences of others; of dictating to them what they were to believe to obtain the favour of God, and of puniſhing them in various ways, by loſs of fame and of worldly ſubſtance, by bodily tortures, impriſonment, loſs of liberty and life at laſt, if they did not comply and ſubmit to them, began early amongſt chriſtians, as ſoon as they were permitted to aſſume a temporal authority over their brethren; and has continued to this hour.

To what a degree it took place in the great churches of the Eaſt and Weſt, and their numerous dependencies, needeth not to be named: All eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is full of it. At the Reformation, thoſe countries which ſeparated themſelves from the church of Rome, and relinquiſhed ſome of it's errors, retained this the greateſt of all, a tyranny over the conſciences of their fellow chriſtians. It is to be lamented, that the different congregations

gregations of Proteſtants among ourſelves, whether thoſe endowed by the State, or diſſenters from the eſtabliſhment, have not yet learned, that other chriſtians are equally entitled to the favour of God with themſelves, though they ſhould apprehend differently of the Divine Being and of the perſon and character of Chriſt, and of many other points of his religion, whilſt they endeavour to the beſt of their power, to underſtand and practice what *Chriſt* taught.

How deſirable to find a cure for this diſgrace of the chriſtian name, the narrowneſs, contempt, and hatred and jealouſies of chriſtians of different ſentiments towards one another! The allowance of no power, emolument, credit, or advantage whatſoever, to perſons for being of one opinion in religion more than another, would do much towards healing theſe ſelfiſh baſe paſſions; when it would be of no worldly benefit to them, to be of one church, or of one religious opinion, more than another.

But it would go farther to remove the root of the evil, if we could but prevail with and

and induce men to ſee and conſider, that there is no foundation in ſcripture, or reaſon, though it is ignorantly taken for granted, that *chriſtians only can be ſaved*; that *they alone will obtain the favour of God and eternal life.* For this doctrine, wherever embraced, leads chriſtians to extravagant and over-high opinions of themſelves, and uncharitable concluſions concerning others. It tends to make them put an undue importance upon the mere belief of chriſtianity; to conceit that they are the favourites of heaven ſolely for embracing it; and that it is meritorious to bring men over to their religious opinions, though they become not more virtuous by it. And what is worſt of all; this appropriating of ſalvation to themſelves, to their own church or ſect or party, makes them of courſe uncharitable towards all thoſe who do not hold with them in opinion, or who oppoſe their ſentiments; and in the end leads them to perſecute others and to do them all manner of harm, as enemies and oppoſers of God and his truth. This is what we ſee every day exemplified.

The

The real ſtate of the matter is this. It is an ineſtimable privilege and happineſs to be born within the ſound of the goſpel; where we have the means and opportunities of informing ourſelves of it's truth, and of enjoying and profiting by thoſe powerful motives and aſſiſtances which it affords.

But thoſe who are not ſo happy as to enjoy theſe advantages; who live where the goſpel is not known; or where it is ſo perverted and corrupted, that inſtead of inviting men, it alienates their minds from it, their ignorance, or averſion even to chriſtianity under ſuch circumſtances, will not be imputed to them; and they will only have to give account of the right uſe of the light, and talents and advantages they ſhall have received. And in this concluſion I am perſuaded you will all agree with me; that in teaching Chriſt's religion, we ſhould never teach young perſons in particular, nor indeed teach any perſons, that chriſtians only can be ſaved; much leſs, chriſtians only of this or that particular church or ſect; but that all perſons will be ſaved, who are made pious and good by their religion; and none elſe.

You

You have gratified us all, when *Voluſian* had ended, immediately replied *Photinus*; in giving ſuch an exact though frightful picture of that religion, which the Almighty ſeems to have permitted for the trial and puniſhment of corrupt chriſtians; and in pointing out the unhappy reſemblance which chriſtianity bears to ſome of its worſt features. It remains now however to go on with our ſubject, and to remark, that on the taking of Conſtantinople in the year 1453, and putting an end to the empire of the Eaſt, by this deſtructive power, of which we have been largely ſpeaking, a new and better proſpect of things opened on theſe weſtern parts, through the diſperſion of many learned Greeks, and the revival of literature by their means; and a ſpirit of free enquiry with it, cheriſhed and brought forward by the providential diſcovery of the art of printing about that period.

Noble efforts were made by many excellent perſons among chriſtians, at the hazard, and ſometimes with the loſs of life, to revive and reſtore the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God, and vindicate the unalienable right

right of all men to judge for themſelves of the things of God, of the duty they owed him, and the worſhip they were to pay him, without any dictatorial authority or interference of the prieſt or magiſtrate. And by the continuance of theſe efforts and the immortal writings of many for theſe laſt 300 years, in different countries, much has been done: the rights of conſcience and of private judgment have been clearly demonſtrated and generally acknowleged; but never, never fairly and really admitted and allowed by any of the great civil and eccleſiaſtical powers, who have been univerſally combined againſt them.

The ſubjects of a mighty neighbouring State, did indeed ſome few years ſince, on principles at firſt approved by the liberal and good, ſet up their juſt claim to thoſe natural rights of which for ages they had been deprived: and happy would it have been for them and for many, if they had adhered to and not ſtepped beyond their firſt righteous demands. In their deviation from them, and the dreadful ſcenes which have enſued, they have brought an undeſerved ſtain and diſ-

grace

grace on the cauſe of liberty, and of the juſt rights of man, in which they firſt ſtood up and were engaged. And as is the wayward diſpoſition of mankind, and frequent courſe of human affairs, they have been the cauſe of alarming many out of their calm and equal judgment, and of throwing them into the unhappy extreme of a dread of all juſt reform, and have thus become the means, for a time, of extinguiſhing light and truth.

Yet moſt juſtly as theſe ſad exceſſes and many of their atrocious conſequences are to be deplored, we can ſee great good reſulting from the evil; in the aboliſhing of no ſmall portion of baneful ſuperſtition, through the whole vaſt dominions of the French and their dependencies; eſpecially in the prohibition of carrying about in proceſſion, in the ſtreets and on the highways, and requiring every paſſenger to bow down to and adore, the wafer God, or breaden God, *Deumpanarium*, as honeſt old Whitby ſcrupled not in deriſion to call it, in James IId's days; that moſt groſs *debaſement* of the Divine being, which, with other things of the ſort and kin to it in the popiſh worſhip, was the legitimate parent

of

of that Atheiſm, with which the french nation hath been branded, and which ſome of its noble emigrants are ſaid to have imported into the Britiſh dominions.

But the moſt deſirable bleſſing which divine providence hath brought out of theſe dreadful evils, has been the putting an utter end to all temporal power whatſoever in religious men, leaving them no authority whatever over others to promote religion, but that which alone belongs to it, of argument and perſuaſion.

From this ſhort glance (for it can be called nothing better) of man, and of his moral ſtate and condition from the beginning, which this preſent ſitting hath afforded us, ſome idea may be collected of the progreſs and moral attainments, for which he was principally made. And though the little effect of genuine virtuous principle, and the defective knowlege of God, have ſhewn themſelves, and ſtill too much appear, in the wars almoſt continually waging between nation and nation; and in the hatred and animoſities on account of difference of religious ſentiments; yet

yet it would be unfair and unjuſt, in the moſt ſceptical, not to admit that knowlege and virtue have been upon the whole progreſſive, and that very many eminent examples of both, have been formed, and are forming, in every age and country.

PHOTINUS here pauſing a little to make ſome apology for his diſcourſe running out to ſo unavoidable a length, expreſſed his apprehenſions that the account that had been given of the moral ſtate of the world from the beginning might be thought to exhibit too humiliating a picture of man placed at the head of the creator's works here below, by thoſe who looked for perfection all at once in every thing that comes from him. But as we are convinced, that a Being of all goodneſs has in fact appointed otherwiſe; and as we certainly do not love our fellow-creatures, or deſire their improvement and happineſs more earneſtly than he that made them, and his wiſdom can beſt judge and direct how to attain that happineſs, we may probably, on a more particular examination, find

find the methods he has actually chosen fully suited to and likely to answer this end, though we may not so immediately see it.

For it is ever to be attended to, that as far as we know or can judge, rational creatures could not become permanently happy as their maker intends them to be, without the exertion of their own voluntary powers, by learning virtue and obedience to his will, ever their truest happiness, in the midst of temptations and difficulties to thwart and oppose, and even at times to mislead them. This may account for our coming out of his hands at first, weak and frail creatures, wholly unformed; the good or evil of our characters not born with us, but acquired afterwards, by a proper use or the contrary, of the powers, faculties, capacities, and means of improvement bestowed upon us. And all are brought into life in situations and circumstances, in which, in different degrees, they are taught what makes for their true happiness.

We are also, all of us, under the divine moral government, whether we attend to it or not. If we indulge ourselves to excess in

the gratification of our appetites, diſeaſe and ſuffering are in general the conſequence; and theſe tend to correct and reſtrain us in future. The ſelfiſh and ambitious loſe all that bliſs and calm enjoyment which ariſe from virtue and a ſenſe of the divine favour, and are ſeen ſometimes to fall the victims, even in this life, to thoſe excruciating tortures, which ſooner or later overtake all thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to make light of human miſery, and to ſlight and neglect the various ways and means in their power of doing good to others.

And we are ſo formed, that the more we lay ourſelves out to relieve the bodily wants and miſeries of others, or to throw light into their dark minds, and bring them to God and goodneſs, the more deſirous we are of being ſo employed, and delighted with it; ſo as to think the day loſt in which we have not had an opportunity of thus ſerving and being uſeful to our fellow-creatures.

It has alſo been noted as a mark of the care and attention of heaven for the virtuous improvement of mankind, that in all times, the

the general ſentiment has been in favour of the higheſt inſtances of virtue and goodneſs, and groſs impiety and immorality, excite horror, and have been ever ſtigmatized with infamy: theſe ſentiments being univerſal, can only have proceeded from the diſpoſitions imbibed by all from the circumſtances in which they are brought into the world, and which are all of divine appointment. Hence from the moſt antient times of which we have any record, it has been held a duty for men to ſacrifice their lives for the good of others; to ſave their country, for inſtance, from imminent danger, and particularly to deliver it from ſlavery, which is worſe than death, as it takes away and extinguiſhes all excitement to whatever is excellent. Such examples have ever been applauded; and to have regarded life, when by hazarding it they could have been of ſuch eminent ſervice to others would have been held the utmoſt diſgrace.

It is to be deplored, that the practice of mankind has not kept pace with their better principles; and that they have not had the fortitude to reſiſt the various temptations to evil, which by degrees have drawn many on

to the commiſſion of crimes, by which human life has ſometimes been rendered a ſcene of miſery and confuſion. Yet in the midſt of all, it muſt give infinite ſatisfaction, that the balance has been always greatly on the ſide of virtue and goodneſs. We are ſhocked with indeed, and know not how to reconcile, the horrid ſcenes which preſent themſelves before our eyes, at particular junctures, eſpecially in times of war and civil commotions. But we can as little form a true judgment of the moral ſtate of men from what paſſes at ſuch ſeaſons, as we can decide of the health and ſalubrioufneſs of a country in the time of a raging infectious fever. In the ordinary courſe of things, in quiet times, the leſs frequent inſtances of cruelty, fraud and oppreſſion, and other evils, (which will in ſome degree always be going on, and cannot entirely be prevented) will be counterbalanced by a general friendlineſs and probity, and mutual kind endearments and ſervices. And in all places, it muſt be confeſſed, the bulk of mankind are and have ever been employed in uſeful labours for their families, and in doing good offices to others, their friends, neighbours and acquaintance, and in giving or procuring

relief

relief and affiſtance where needed, and in a thouſand beneficent actions.

As this however is very much a matter of experience and obſervation, whether there be a preponderance of moral good in the preſent ſtate, or not; I ſhall beg leave to produce a teſtimony in favour of it, from an eminent perſon of great learning and knowlege of the world, who might be ſuppoſed to be biaſſed to the other ſide of the argument by the prejudices of his profeſſion, and ſhall read it to you as I find it publiſhed by *Dr. Law*, the late Biſhop of Carliſle, with approbation. Thus then ſpeaks *Dr. King*, Archbiſhop of Dublin, ſome time after the beginning of the laſt century, to an anonymous opponent, who had ſaid "that the prevalence of wickedneſs, or moral evil, was a thing ſo certain, that he was confident, no one could have the leaſt doubt of it, and he durſt ſay, that the *Author* himſelf believed it."

"The *Author* profeſſes himſelf to be of a quite different opinion," replies the Archbiſhop. "He firmly believes, and thinks he very well comprehends, that there is much

more moral good in the world than evil. He is ſenſible there may be more bad men than good, becauſe there are none but do amiſs ſometimes, and one ill act is ſufficient to denominate a man bad. But yet there are ten good acts done by thoſe we call bad men for one ill one. Even perſons of the very worſt character may have gotten it by two or three flagrant enormities, which yet bear no proportion to the whole ſeries of their lives. The author muſt profeſs, that among ſuch as he is acquainted with, he believes that there are hundreds that would do him good for one that would do him hurt; and that he has received a thouſand good offices for one ill one. He could never believe the doctrine of *Hobbs*, that all men are bears, wolves and tygers to one another; that they are born enemies to all others, and all others to them; that they are naturally falſe and perfidious; or that all the good they do, is out of fear, not virtue. Nay the very authors of that calumny, if their own characters were called in queſtion, would take all poſſible pains to remove the ſuſpicion from them; and declare that they were ſpeaking of the vulgar, of the bulk of mankind, and not of themſelves.

Nor

Nor in reality do they behave in this manner toward their friends and acquaintance; if they did, few would truſt them. Obſerve ſome of thoſe who exclaim againſt all mankind for treachery, diſhoneſty, deceit and cruelty; and you'll find them diligently cultivating friendſhip, and diſcharging the ſeveral offices due to friends, their relations and their country, with labour, pain, loſs of goods, and hazard of life itſelf; even where there is no fear to drive them to it, nor inconvenience attending the neglect of it. This you'll ſay proceeds from cuſtom and education. Be it ſo: However the world then has not ſo far degenerated from goodneſs, but the greater part of mankind exerciſe benevolence, nor is virtue ſo far exiled as not to be ſupported and approved, praiſed and practiſed, by common conſent, and public ſuffrage, and vice is ſtill diſgraceful. Indeed we can ſcarce meet with one, unleſs preſſed by neceſſity, or provoked by injuries, who is ſo barbarous and hard hearted, as not to be moved with compaſſion, and delighted with benevolence to others; who is not delighted to ſhew good-will and kindneſs to his friends, neighbours, children, relations; and diligence in the diſ-

charge of civil duties to all; who does not profeſs ſome regard for virtue, and think himſelf affronted when he is charged with immorality. If any one take notice of his own or another's actions for a day together, he will perhaps find one or two blameable, the reſt all innocent and inoffenſive. Nay, it is doubtful whether a *Nero* or *Caligula*, a *Commodus* or *Caracalla*, (though monſters of mankind, and prone to every act of wickedneſs and fury) have done more ill than innocent actions through their whole lives *."

Theſe juſt obſervations on the general character and conduct of men, ſhew, that far from being altogether wicked and worthleſs, they are ſuch as in their firſt ſtate might be expected, from their frail and imperfect frame, and the good and evil influences to which they are ſubject; liable to fall by yielding to the various temptations to which they are expoſed; and on the other hand, by nobly

* Eſſay on the Origin of Evil, by *William King*, Archbiſhop of Dublin, tranſlated from the Latin with notes by *Edmund*, Biſhop of Carliſle (p. 388) The fifth edition reviſed. London, by Faulder. 1781.

reſiſting them, capable of being carried forwards to that which is moſt excellent.

And thus the wiſdom and goodneſs of the creator are vindicated; that he has not made mankind in vain; that he was not diſappointed in this the nobleſt work of his creation here below; and that in the dangerous trials and difficulties to which it was neceſſary to expoſe his rational offspring, as they could not in any other way become virtuous and happy as he intended them to be, while many fell away for the preſent, many alſo cleaved to truth and goodneſs, and became purified, and confirmed therein; and the world has been from the firſt and all along, a nurſery for virtuous, noble and uſeful characters.

The company after ſome general converſation, and appointing a day for the farther diſcuſſion of theſe ſubjects, now ſeparated.

CON-

CONVERSATION IV.

WHEN the party was next aſſembled, *Marcellinus* deſired to expreſs his ſatisfaction in the progreſs made in the diſquiſition before them. It was moſt pleaſing, he ſaid, to ſee it ſo clearly made out, that mankind were far from being ſo miſerable or wicked as they were commonly preſumed to be, and that the contrary was rather the truth and the fact. But clouds and darkneſs ſtill hung over the proſpect, through which he ſhould be glad to ſee ſome light appear. The road through life, which many of the human ſpecies were deſtined to tread, was ſo diſmal and dreary, along ſuch dreadful paſſages of pain and miſery, as to make one ſhudder at the thought of it; and the diſpoſitions and habits were ſo depraved, malignant, horridly ſelfiſh, cruel and vicious, which many were ſeen to carry out of the world with them, that ſome better ſolution than had yet appeared was earneſtly to be wiſhed for, how ſuch a conſtitution of things

things could have its origin from, or be compatible with, a benevolent principle.

If theſe evils and diſorders were to be attributed, as ſome philoſophers have maintained, to the rugged untractable nature of matter, or of whatever it be, of which we are compoſed, and that it was through this or ſome other unavoidable impediment, and not from want of good-will in our creator, but of power to execute to the full his benevolent purpoſes, that we were made ſubject to ſuch harſh conditions of exiſtence, which was ſaid to have been, for ſome time, the opinion of the late enlightened friend of his country and mankind, Mr. *Day* *, though he afterwards relinquiſhed it, and embraced juſter ſentiments of the divine power and goodneſs:

Or, if, as revelation has been thought to inculcate, it was owing to ſome powerful evil Being, whoſe interference in the affairs of mankind was unavoidable, that we were expoſed to ſuch a variety of ſufferings and temptations, and oft-times miſled to ruin by

* Author of Sandford and Merton.

yielding

yielding to them: in either of theſe caſes, we muſt ſubmit and make the beſt of what we cannot avoid or amend.

But all gloom would vaniſh and day-light diſcloſe its beautiful rays, if it could be ſhewn, with ſuch evidence as might ſatisfy the rational mind, that the great whole of things is in ſuch ſort from God; that natural and moral evil, pain and ſuffering, ſin and wickedneſs, are all of his appointment, and permitted for good; he could then chearfully acquieſce and reſt contented, whatever came to paſs, ſecure that we were in the beſt hands; and that however ſad and diſaſtrous at times, and in ſome particular caſes, appearances were, all was for the beſt, and would in the reſult turn out favorable and happy. This was the great difficulty; the Gordian knot, which he almoſt deſpaired of ever ſeeing untied.

Photinus, here, who had been obſerved to be more than ordinarily attentive and wrapt in thought, whilſt *Marcellinus* was ſpeaking, ſuddenly roſe up, and with greater earneſtneſs and ſolemnity than he was accuſtomed to; "Be aſſured, my friends, ſays he, that we

we do not any of us deem ſo highly of the boundleſs mercy and goodneſs of the ſovereign creator and parent of all things, as his works, and dealings with us and with all his creatures call for and demand, or we ſhould entertain more exalted thoughts of him, and live under his government, with a more uninterrupted joy and confidence than we ſeem to do, ſo as not to admit any, the leaſt doubt or miſtruſt that his goodneſs will in the end bear down every oppoſition.

For what do we behold, every where and in all things, but marks and tokens of wiſe contrivance and intentions of kindneſs for the creatures he has made; and alſo at the ſame time, plain indications, that if any comfort or ſatisfaction is denied or withdrawn from them, that might miniſter to their preſent happineſs; or pain and miſery inflicted in the ſevereſt degree, it has been for good. Theſe his kind intentions and beneficence to the whole ſentient inferior creation, throughout the planet we inhabit, we have lately ſeen exemplified by a large induction of particular inſtances, which might be extended without bounds, and which poſterity in their inveſtigations

gations will take pleaſure in enlarging throughout all future ages, and literally never be able to exhauſt.

And with regard to his rational creation, formed in the image and likeneſs of their great creator and to be happy, may we preſume to ſpeak it, with his own happineſs; always remembering, that ſuch is the frame and conſtitution beſtowed upon us, that our true happineſs cannot be a thing infuſed into us, but muſt ariſe from our own voluntary exertions and labour, in ſurmounting difficulties in our way, and acquiring thoſe tempers and diſpoſitions, wherein it conſiſts, and by which it is confirmed and muſt be perpetuated; namely, the diſpoſitions of a ſupreme love to Him who gave us our being and all our powers, and an invincible affection to all our fellow-creatures and to all to whom our good offices can extend; which effects, the moral diſcipline we are put under however painful and ſevere, from our own paſſions and the world without us, is exactly calculated to produce:

Theſe

Theſe facts being eſtabliſhed; and taking along with us, that this happineſs, for which we were made, the higheſt of which we or any created nature are capable, is a happineſs which alone is permanent and for ever increaſing:

It ſeems a ſolid foundation of reaſoning, on which we may ſafely rely; that as the univerſe and all things in it are the work of a being of infinite wiſdom and power, and of the moſt perfect goodneſs, and calculated for the beſt purpoſes, the happineſs of the things he has made; and as there was nothing to over-rule him in his operations, or to induce or compel him to adopt any meaſures for accompliſhing his kind deſigns, but ſuch as he judged the moſt proper and ſuitable:

Therefore, as he has placed us in a world, wherein, though happineſs greatly preponderates, there is ſuch a mixture of pain and ſuffering, of vice and miſery, as fills us often with melancholy apprehenſions and diſmay; we may be fully perſuaded, that ſuch a diſcordant, revolting mixture would not have been admitted into his fair creation, but becauſe

cauſe he ſaw it neceſſary for its perfection, and the fulfilment of his benevolent purpoſes; or rather, becauſe thoſe purpoſes could not be obtained without it: for moſt aſſuredly, he would not have choſen evil on its own account, the miſery and defilement of his creatures, but for the good that he ſaw would be derived from and procured by it.

And what we thus argue from the character and perfections of the deity, manifeſted in his works; that evil, natural and moral, pain and ſuffering, vice and miſery, were only admitted by him, on account of the ſuperior good accruing from them, not otherwiſe to be attained; we alſo find to be true in fact and by experience.

For if there had been no moral evil or wickedneſs, mankind would have been deſtitute of thoſe diſpoſitions and affections, which are their higheſt perfection, and the ſource of their pureſt happineſs. Where would have been patience and forgiveneſs of injuries; where the godlike diſpoſition of returning good

good for evil, if there had been no fraud, or cruelties, or oppreſſion exerciſed? "Had the good and virtuous of mankind been wholly proſperous in this world," ſays an excellent perſon; "had goodneſs never met with oppoſition, where had been the trial, the victory, and the crown of virtue?" It is by a reſiſtance to the alluring enticements to unlawful gratification of the inferior appetites and paſſions, and reſolutely turning away from faſcinating pleaſure, that habits of temperance, chaſtity, and a virtuous ſelf-denial are acquired. If by ſtifling that kind, mutual affection, which is nature's dictate to all, we had not become eager to graſp every advantage to ourſelves, ſeeking only our own indulgence by every means, ambitious, envious, unjuſt, trampling upon the rights and happineſs of other men, impatient of rebuke and contradiction, revengeful, unawed by any fear of God, and his juſt awards; there would have been no dangers to encounter with; no hardſhips or miſeries, no perſecutions in the cauſe of truth and virtue to endure; no conflicts between an unſwerving integrity and honeſty on the one hand, and a compliance with the mean views of intereſt,

and worldly greatneſs on the other; and we ſhould have wanted thoſe noble examples of undiſſembled piety, of meekneſs, fortitude, magnanimity, diſintereſted zeal for and purſuit of the public good, not of one nation, but of all mankind, which have ſtimulated the good in all ages to the like virtuous exertions and attainments. So that as it has been juſtly ſaid of natural evil, pain, diſeaſes and the like, in vindication of the divine goodneſs, that there is no *uſeleſs* evil: So muſt we ſay of moral evil, ſin and wickedneſs; that in the hands of God, every evil of every kind is made an inſtrument of greater good, and higher felicity, than would otherwiſe have been enjoyed.

Philotus was going on, as if he had ſomething farther to produce, when *Valerian* ſtarting up in a kind of extacy, uttering the words of our great poet,

> Juſt are the ways of God,
> And juſtifiable to men;
> Unleſs there be who think not God at all:
> If any be, they walk obſcure *:

* Sampſon Agoniſtes.

You

You will pardon me, my friends, ſaid he, this abrupt interference, and I hope *Photinus* will excuſe me thus rudely breaking in upon him, to give vent to the happineſs I feel this day in hearing from him ſo deſirable a vindication of providence, in reſpect of the calamities and painful ſufferings, the abounding vice and miſery of this lower world; that the whole has its origin in, and will in the end be found to be a part of the divine goodneſs.

This is the clue ſo earneſtly wiſhed and ſought for by us in the courſe of our argument and inquiry, to guide us through *the mighty maze*, and quiet the mind under the ſerious perplexities that ariſe from the view of theſe ſad appendages of human life. In all ages, in ſeeking to account for ſuch a ſtate of things, conſiſtently with the divine attributes, learned and thoughtful men, among other devices, have moſt commonly had recourſe to the ſuppoſition, that it was in conſequence of crimes committed in a former period of exiſtence, that mankind were thruſt into theſe dreary abodes of pain and miſery, to expiate their previous guilt, and that this amply juſtified the divine Being in bringing

us into ſuch a world. But this was always found to be a fairy-land of imagination merely, without any facts or reality to ſupport it; no paſſenger of all the ſons or daughters of men, ever having retained in memory the fainteſt trace of ſuch a ſtate; and the fond ſuppoſition ſerved only to amuſe and ſoothe the inventors and their followers.

In deed and in truth, this, with which *Photinus* hath furniſhed us, is the only key that effectually unlocks the intricate wards of the divine government, and ſolves the difficulties of man's lot and deſtiny in this firſt ſtage of his exiſtence.

I hope he will excuſe my repeating his argument in a few words, that he may ſee I have not miſtaken him.

"That a Being of infinite wiſdom and power, and the moſt perfect goodneſs, deſirous of the happineſs of his creatures, has made, appoints and regulates all things:"

"That according to certain laws, perceived and acknowleged by all who will be at

at the pains to conſider his works, he governs the world of nature; feeds and preſerves in life and happineſs the whole ſenſitive inferior creation of birds and beaſts, inſects and fiſhes, &c. for their deſtined term of exiſtence, longer or ſhorter; and renews and continues the ſpecies of each from age to age:"

"That he alſo takes care of and governs his rational creation, according to their different natures, leading them to their chief good, to piety and virtue; all their powers and all their good actions proceeding from him; and all that is bad and evil and irregular in them alike being from him, and under his controul, and permitted only to a certain degree and limit, ſo as to promote his deſigns of univerſal virtue and happineſs."

For want of ſeeing the perfect benevolence of the Deity in the light in which this juſt repreſentation places him, as connected with a righteous moral government, begun here,

and going on to its completion in another state, ſome great characters have ſunk into moſt unhappy and baneful errors. The late king of Pruſſia, Frederick, the great, as he is called, here ſtumbled and fell, ſo as never to recover: And as I perſuade myſelf it will not lead us out of the way of our preſent inquiries, I would crave your permiſſion to dwell a little on his ſtory, from the materials with which he himſelf has furniſhed us.

From the writings probably of *Leibnitz*, and others, and the penetrating reſearches of an ardent mind, this prince was led very early to embrace ſentiments concerning the neceſſity of human actions, which in the end he appears to have carried much farther than his teachers would have approved. On his firſt acquaintance and correſpondence with *M. de Voltaire*, begun in 1737, when only prince royal, we find him thus expreſſing himſelf at the cloſe of his defence of theſe ſentiments, in reply to the objections of that celebrated writer;

" I will

"I will add one remark *," says he, "to what has gone before; which is, that neither freewill nor neceſſity, exculpate the Deity from being a party to the crimes of his creatures. For whether he gives us a liberty to do evil, or directly prompts us to it, it is all the ſame; it is ſtill his doing. In going back to the origin of evil, you muſt aſcribe it to God, unleſs you eſpouſe the ſentiment of the Manicheans concerning two principles, one of them the author of evil; which however is loaded with the greateſt difficulties."

He could however never bring himſelf to a laſting ſatisfactory perſuaſion, that the pre-

* Je n'ajouterai qu'une reflection à celles que je viens de faire; c'eſt que ni le franc arbitre, ni la fatalité ſubſtituée, ne diſculpent pas la Divinité de ſa participation au crime: car que Dieu nous donne la liberté de mal faire, ou qu'il nous pouſſe immediatement au crime, cela revient à peu pres au même; il n'y a que du plus ou du moins. Remontez à l'origine du mal, vous ne pouvez que l'attribuer à Dieu, à moins que vous ne voulez embraſſer l'opinion des Manichéens touchant les deux principes; ce qui ne laiſſe pas d'etre hériſſé de difficultés. Le 17 Fevrier, 1738.

Correſpondance de Frederic II. Roy de Pruſſe. Tome Premier, 1789. p. 225.

ſent conſtitution of things was for good; though he ſometimes ſpeaks moſt feelingly of it, and of its benevolent author. Nor could he relieve or remove the anxious thoughts on the ſubject, which at times would unavoidably obtrude themſelves, by looking forward to a future ſtate of being, where all evils and irregularities would be healed and corrected. For he appears to have been alienated in very early youth, to a moſt unreaſonable degree, againſt the jewiſh and chriſtian revelations, which might have given him light here, and been ſome ballaſt to his wavering mind. In conſequence of theſe moſt unfortunate prejudices, he ſeems to have been without any, or at leaſt to have got rid of all ſentiments of the moral government of God, which may have contributed to make him more eaſy in the thought, with which at laſt he became unalterably impreſſed, that all was over with man, when he cloſed his eyes upon theſe preſent ſcenes; concerning which he * and his friend D'Alembert ſpeak at times

* Du Roi, 9 Sept. 1775. Savez vous bien que je ſuis vieux, (63) et que ſi je ne vous revois dans ce monde-ci, je

times with a gaiety and unconcern which is not natural, and indeed ſeems affected.

The ſame early prejudices hindered him from profiting by the wiſe leſſons, and from all beneficial intercourſe with the moſt liberal and eminently learned *M. de Beauſobre*, whom nevertheleſs he moſt highly eſteemed to the laſt, whence it happened, that his converſation chiefly lay with *M. de Voltaire* and the french philoſophers, who were darker, and if poſſible more ſteeled and ſet againſt all juſt and proper inquiry into the ſubject of religion than himſelf. So that this eminent perſon of courſe plunged deeper and deeper in ſcepticiſm and uncertainty, and was driven at length to take refuge in the forlorn ſyſtem of the world being eternal; and that there-

je vous donnerai rendez-vous à pure perte dans la vallée de Joſaphat.

De M. D'Alembert, 15 Sept. 1775.

Je lui envie bien ſincèrement le bonheur qu'il a eu d'approcher de V. M. et je deſirerai de jouir de ce bonheur au moins encore une fois, avant de rendre mon corps aux élémens qui ne tarderont pas à le redemander.

Ditto. Tome cinquieme.

fore,

fore, as there was no creation, it was in vain to ſeek to account for any thing: grounding and repoſing himſelf on that aphoriſm of ſeveral of the antient philoſophers, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, nothing can come from nothing: which muſt be acknowleged to be true, when ſpoken of beings of limited powers, but is not applicable to God, whoſe power is infinite. For although to produce things out of nothing argues a power wholly inconceivable by us, there is no contradiction in it.

D'Alembert's * letter to the king from Paris, Nov. 30, 1770, on this very ſubject, is

* Enfin, en admettant cette intelligence, qui a préſidé à la formation de l'univers, et qui préſide à ſon entretien, on ſera obligé de convenir au moins qu'elle n'eſt ni infiniment ſage, ni infiniment puiſſante, puiſqu' il s'en faut bien, pour le malheur de la pauvre humanité, que ce triſte monde ſoit le meilleur de mondes poſſibles. Nous ſommes donc reduits, avec la meilleure volonté du monde, à ne reconnâitre et à n'admettre tout au plus dans l'univers qu'un Dieu materiel, borné, et dependant; je ne ſais pas ſi c'eſt là ſon compte, mais ce n'eſt ſûrement pas celui de partiſans zelés de l'exiſtence de Dieu; ils nous aimeraient autant athées que ſpinoſiſtes, comme nous le ſommes. Pour les adoucir, ſeſons-nous ſceptiques, et repetons

is full of much ill placed wit and indecent raillery, to ſpeak in the ſofteſt terms, againſt thoſe who believed in the exiſtence of a creator and moral governor of the world, and ſhews how miſerable he and his royal friend and patron were made by the principles they had embraced; and likewiſe what wretched reaſoners and pitiable beings men of the brighteſt and moſt cultivated talents and abilities degenerate into, when they ſeek to extinguiſh the light that is in them, and turn away from God.

It would have been moſt happy for them both, if they had been poſſeſſed of and influenced by the like amiable views of the conſtitution of nature, and of its divine almighty author, with Monſ. *Turgot*, Miniſter of ſtate for ſome time to the unfortunate *Louis* XVI, their contemporary, and not unknown to them; in learning and abilities not inferior to either, in moral qualities far above them; which led him (though with preju-

repetons avec Montagne, *que ſais je?* A Paris ce 26 Novembre 1770.

Ditto. Tome quatrieme, p. 176.

dices

dices against revelation, in France, at that period ſcarce avoidable by a rational mind) to look forward to a future ſtate of exiſtence, in which all preſent evils, and diſorders and obliquities would be remedied and rectified *.

* For the high character of this virtuous miniſter of the unfortunate Louis XVI, Monſ. Turgot, ſee Monſ. Senac de Meilham (a): for which I am indebted, among many other favors for near thirty years, to one, whoſe liberal, benevolent and generous labors are conſtantly exerted in various ways to benefit mankind, and promote the cauſe of true religion and virtue (b).

To his ſuggeſtions jointly with thoſe of another very able and moſt valuable chriſtian character (c), (to whoſe friendſhip, virtues, and memory, my heart pays the moſt affectionate and grateful tribute) was owing the variation made in the laſt edition of the Reformed Liturgy in 1793 after the model of the excellent Dr. Samuel Clarke, by changing the threefold addreſs retained in the Litany, into one ſolemn and appropriate one: They juſtly obſerving, that a threefold addreſs would keep up the old impreſſion of a threefold nature in the Deity, ſo contrary to the Scriptures.

(a) Du Governement, des Mœurs, et des conditions en France, avant la Revolution.

(b) Francis Maſeres, Eſq. Curſitor Baron of his Majeſty's Court of Exchequer, and Author of the Moderate Reformer.

(c) John Lee, Eſq. Solicitor General under Lord Rockingham's Adminiſtration.

But

But I have done, ſays *Voluſian*, and have now to hope *Photinus* will excuſe my rudeneſs and impetuoſity —— —— Not merely excuſe, replies *Photinus*, but thank you moſt heartily for it, and for the good fruits it has produced. Take care, however, you do not bring yourſelf into a dilemma you cannot eaſily get out of, by your too laviſh commendations of us, and citation from our great poet in our favour; when others may retort upon you, that he moſt aſſuredly muſt have had us in his eye, as a ſet of well meaning, melancholy mortals attempting to account for what is beyond their reach; where he deſcribes ſome of his inhabitants of Pandemonium, who

reaſon'd high
Of providence, foreknowlege, will and fate,
Fixt fate, freewill, foreknowlege abſolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes loſt.

But the inſtances of the two memorable characters you have produced are much to our purpoſe, in ſo directly pointing out the fatal darkneſs and wretchedneſs that muſt ever enſue, when in an age ſo enlightened as that

that we live in, any can be ſo blinded as not to ſee a God, and a wiſe providential care exerciſed over all creatures for their good, eſpecially all the rational part of them. You have fully ſhewn however that it was by their acquired moral ignorance that they were ſo fatally miſled, and not by their opinion of the neceſſity of human actions, on which ſome would lay blame.

It is however matter of the higheſt exultation and joy, in which we may juſtly triumph, to be fully aſſured, that mere arbitrary will and ſovereignty, from which we could never know what we were to expect, hath no ſway in the divine government under which we are placed; and that original love and goodneſs, are the beginning and end, the ſpring and meaſure of all the actions of the Deity, and of all his dealings with us. Hence with the moſt perfect confidence, we conclude, that every evil of every kind is ordained for preſent or ultimate good: Not only ſickneſs, and pain, and diſeaſe in all its ſhapes, deſolating ſtorms, earthquakes, famine, peſtilence, wars, and the ordinary and the

the leſs common calamities of life; but the horrid cruelties, injuſtice, oppreſſion, &c. with which individuals and ſometimes whole countries have had to ſtruggle for a longer or ſhorter ſpace: All theſe natural and moral evils are from God and under his ſovereign controul, ſo as to be permitted to ſpread no farther, and continue no longer than his purpoſes of good are ſerved by them; dictating, in his ſupreme all-ruling providence, to wicked tyrants and oppreſſors of mankind, and to every inſtrument of evil, *Hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no further; here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed.* Job xxxviii.

In the ſolution we have offered, of the origin of the evil there is in the world, it is conceded, that the Almighty knowingly and deſignedly appointed it, for the ſuperior good that he ſaw would be derived from it. We his frail and ignorant creatures however are on no account to tranſgreſs the plain rule of moral duty, to do evil that good may come: becauſe our underſtandings are weak and limited;

limited; and we cannot be ſure that the good we intend will happen. But our Maker, as we have ſeen at large, out of that limited quantity of evil, which he judges fitting to appoint and permit, continually produces virtue and every good.

This is pleaſingly exhibited to us in the well known beautiful ſtory of the Hermit, who being perplexed to account for the ways of providence, quitted his cell for a time, in queſt of ſatisfaction to his anxious mind. The narrative is given us in "Divine Dialogues concerning the attributes and providence of God, London printed 1668;" a work of the pious *Dr. Henry More* of Cambridge: but is better known in the poetical dreſs of *Dr. Parnell.*

We ſhall avoid ſome of the perplexity and difficulties, in which good minds are wont to be involved, from the idea of the evil actions of men being of divine appointment, as though God himſelf were the immediate author of ſin and wickedneſs; if we conſider, that the Almighty Being, if we may ſo ſpeak,

acteth

acteth not immediately himſelf in directing the actions of men, and influencing them to good or evil: but it is by the intervention of inſtruments employed by him, of ſecond cauſes, as we term it, in the natural courſe of things, and according to laws eſtabliſhed by himſelf, that He the firſt great cauſe influences and governs all things, and bringeth them to paſs. In other words, it is by the different motives that ariſe in our minds, from our ſituation and circumſtances, which are all of divine appointment, that we are led to evil and to good. Thus are we to underſtand what is ſaid, Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things ſpoken of Paul*; i. e. her pious and virtuous mind, thoſe good diſpoſitions which ſhe had imbibed from her ſituation and circumſtances, all of them originally from God; inclined her to liſten to Paul.

Thus alſo, *The* LORD *hardened the heart of Pharaoh*; Exod. xi. 10. i. e. being a man void of all juſt ſenſe and knowlege of God, and totally indiſpoſed to him, he became only the more alienated from obeying his commands by thoſe miracles, which had a

natural tendency, and were wrought to produce obedience.

It is matter of conſtant obſervation, and verified in the ſacred and in all hiſtory, that Divine providence oftentimes makes uſe of the evil paſſions and wickedneſs of men, to promote its good deſigns. That moſt horrid act of deſtroying the life of the holy and innocent Jeſus was brought about by the treachery of one of his own diſciples, and the mean temporizing ſpirit and conduct of Pontius Pilate, the roman governor of Judea, Acts iv. 25—28.

And the book of Geneſis furniſhes a remarkable example of the Almighty turning the wickedneſs of men to ſerve his own benevolent purpoſes, in the pleaſing narrative of *Joſeph* and his brethren.

It was not ye that ſent me into Egypt: for God did ſend me before you to preſerve life, Gen. xlv. 5. ſaid *Joſeph* to his brethren, to ſoothe them under their fears of being made to ſuffer for their cruel and unnatural behaviour. God was concerned in this act of

of theirs, by having brought them into life in ſuch a ſituation, wherein he foreſaw they would meanly give way to a vile envy againſt their younger brother on account of his being of a more ſprightly and amiable diſpoſition than themſelves, and more beloved by their father, which ſtirred up their bad paſſions to ſeek his deſtruction, and ſell him into Egypt.

On this hiſtory, an old writer thus remarks; "Such an ordering and overruling hand hath God in all the evil actions of men. When Joſeph's brethren ſell him into Egypt, God is ſaid to *ſend* him. Human malice and divine providence may be together in the ſame act. Wherein men have an evil hand, God hath a good one; who brings light out of darkneſs and turns evil in the end to good." *Burthogge* on Divine Goodneſs, p. 44.

It is however to be remembered, that whatever we define concerning the divine agency and government over mankind and their affairs, and the manner of it, of which we muſt ever conceive and ſpeak, like children, moſt imperfectly; and although we

cannot but be perſuaded that all the actions of men are under the antecedent direction and appointment of God, for how could he otherwiſe govern the world? Yet mankind are not a mere piece of clock-work, a ſet of unconſcious machines. They acquire voluntary powers, by which they do what they pleaſe; chuſe for themſelves and follow their choice; take blame to and condemn themſelves for whatever they do that is impious, or wicked, or hurtful to others: and more than this, think themſelves not unrighteouſly or inequitably dealt with in being made to ſuffer for their evil diſpoſitions and actions in order to correct and amend them, under the divine government in the preſent world; nor, if they continue unreformed and unchanged, expect to eſcape puniſhment in a future ſtate. So that if God be charged in any way with being the author of men's ſins, it is not in any ſuch ſenſe as to acquit the perpetrators, or ſo as to excuſe them even in their own eſtimate from being reſponſible at the tribunal of that Being, whoſe laws, calculated, for their own and the general good of all, they have violated.

In a word; we are conſcious that we are not mere puppets acted upon; but agents, reſponſible for what we do. We are alſo fully perſuaded, that all we do is beforehand known to God, and appointed by him. How this divine foreknowlege and appointment are to be reconciled with the freedom and reſponſibility of our actions, is beyond our comprehenſion. Nor need we to be at all concerned about it. And in this concluſion, Mr. *Locke*, may quiet our minds; and alſo read us an uſeful leſſon of modeſty and candour in our judgments concerning the word and the works of God; who, in his ſecond anſwer to the Biſhop of *Worceſter*, that had accuſed him of advancing ſomething concerning the nature of the ſoul, which implied that men were not free agents, thus replies to the charge;

" It is not for me to judge how far your Lordſhip's ſpeculations reach; but finding in myſelf nothing to be truer than what the wiſe *Solomon* tells me, Eccleſ. xi. 5. *as thou knoweſt not what is the way of the ſpirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even ſo thou knoweſt not*

the works of God who maketh all things: I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of revelation, which ſets me at reſt in many things, the manner of which my poor reaſon can by no means make out to me; omnipotence, I know, can do any thing that contains in it no contradiction; ſo that I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reaſon find difficulties in it, which it cannot maſter. As in the preſent caſe, God having revealed that there ſhall be a day of judgment, I think that foundation enough to conclude men are free enough to be anſwerable for their actions, and to receive according to what they have done; though how man is a free agent, ſurpaſs my explication or comprehenſion."

Syneſius ſeemed now inclined to take part in the debate, but the reſt of the company propoſing that the farther diſcuſſion of the ſubject ſhould be deferred to another opportunity, he acquieſced in their wiſhes.

CONVERSATION V.

*SYNESIUS**, who was an old common friend, and of all their parties, though in many points he differed from them; and formerly in their Converſations on chriſtian idolatry, had endeavoured on that account, to divert *Voluſian* from quitting the worſhip of the eſtabliſhed church, put himſelf forward at the next meeting, and pleaſantly cried out, that he was quite tired of being ſuch a cypher among them, but thought it became him firſt to make his confeſſion, that they might admit him as a true penitent.

I muſt plainly tell you then, ſays he, I had been much hurt at the freedoms you uſed in calling in queſtion what was eſtabliſhed by authority in the church of England, as I thought it was unſettling people, and taking away the little foundation they had for their

* See, for a character of this perſon, Converſations on Chriſtian Idolatry, page 64.

demeanour as quiet and good ſubjects, ſetting them looſe from all reſtraints, and leaving them in poſſeſſion of nothing. For I had been wont to conſider the chriſtian religion principally as it concerned the ſtate, and was uſeful to keep the people in order and ſubjection; and indeed, all the while I contended ſo earneſtly for it, entertained not a few doubts about its doctrines, and even its foundations.

But I have been for ſome time convinced, that ſerious doubts and diſputes about religion do by no means lead men away from moral practice, but the contrary; as they ſober the mind, bring us acquainted with ourſelves and our own characters, and the principles well founded or otherwiſe, on which we act, and thereby tend to fix us in a courſe of right conduct. Nor can any damage or diſturbance ever reſult to the State, from diſputes, or differences of opinion in religion, if the State will only do its duty, and act as becomes it, by holding an equal hand over all its ſubjects, and reſtrain them from injuring or hurting one another for their religious differences.

But

But that I have not been of late an indifferent hearer, though I have taken no part in your debates, you will believe, when I tell you, that I have found my mind as fully relieved by them from many doubts on important ſubjects with which I had been perplexed, as if I had laid them before you for the purpoſe.

1. I was wont to be much diſturbed, that we were creatures ſo framed, that there was little pure happineſs to be found, and ſo much pain and miſery of one kind or other mixed in our cup, as if we had been the work of ſome envious Being, who had grudged us our enjoyments. But I am now perſuaded, that it was the happineſs of the unthinking brute animals that I coveted, and not of a rational being; which is not to be attained without labour and difficulty.

2. The firſt chapters of our ſacred books ſeemed to be a moſt ſtrange exhibition of the God and creator of all things, and of the firſt origin of our ſpecies, ſo inveloped in figure and allegory, that with difficulty can any tolerable ſenſe be made of it; for I expected,

expected, that the proofs of his exiſtence, and of his love and regard for his creatures, if he had really been poſſeſſed of theſe qualities, would have been pointed out to us in a brief energetick manner.

But I am now perſuaded, that Divine Wiſdom hath judged better for us in the methods which *Moſes* has been directed to purſue. For that there is one God, and that he is good, his works of nature teach; and have been ſo underſtood by all who have conſidered them, a very few perſons excepted, of pitiable mental or bodily infirmities, or both. But ſuch an authoritative hiſtorical account, as is furniſhed us in the Bible, of a God, as I may ſay, really exiſting and acting, as our creator and moral governor, makes ſtronger impreſſions, gives fuller conviction, and is better calculated to operate upon the minds of human creatures, and carry down to all ages the momentous truth, than ſpeculative arguments; which would be liable to perpetual diſpute and quibble; as we find to have been the fact, in antient times, and in our own.

3. I had been much hurt in peruſing, and ſtrongly tempted to ſlight the whole account of the Deity given in the Bible, for his being repreſented from the firſt and throughout, not as a benevolent creator, and patron and encourager of virtue and goodneſs, but an arbitrary, capricious, malevolent Being *; bringing into exiſtence a race of creatures, and ſoon repenting of what he had done, and deſtroying them; and upon renewing their race afterwards, conducting himſelf towards them in the ſame unſteady partial manner, ſelecting as the objects of his ſpecial favour, characters by no means worthy of it.

But you have ſatisfied me, that I condemned what I did not underſtand: that it was not the plan and deſign of the Creator to bring creatures any how to happineſs, but by degrees, and by ſuitable diſcipline to form them to piety and goodneſs, the true felicity of rational beings. This is plainly indicated

* Upon this ſubject I would beg leave to recommend a ſerious peruſal of the admirable and eloquent diſcourſes on the Providence and Government of God, by a late excellent man and highly eſteemed friend, the Rev. N. Cappe, of York.

in

in the account of the firſt creation of our ſpecies, and is the key, with which we may open and explain many things belonging to our preſent ſtate.

4. I had ſtumbled, with many others, at the divine command to deſtroy the Canaanitiſh nations, being perſuaded that it could not come from a benevolent creator, and that it was all the work and contrivance of prieſts and politicians, who had taken poſſeſſion of the minds of the multitude, and preſumed to repreſent as God's commands what was the dictate of their own implacable temper and ambition. But you have contributed to put me on farther inquiry and to convince me, that it was not unbefitting the moral governor and the lover of his creatures, to interpoſe in the way *Moſes* has deſcribed, to prevent the horrid practices that prevailed throughout thoſe nations, at leaſt to give a check, if not intirely to eradicate them; and alſo to make his favoured nation the inſtruments of his judgments; favoured, not for their own ſakes, for they, as he told them, were not better than others, but for the ſake of their more deſerving progenitors. And throughout the

ſacred

ſacred hiſtory, from the beginning, I ſee no *omnipotent tyrant*, no *Moloch, furious king*, as he has been deſcribed, delighting himſelf with the miſeries and deſtruction of his creatures; but a kind creator and moral governor, concerned for their beſt intereſts, and to bring them to true happineſs.

5. I have alſo peculiar pleaſure in noting throughout the books of *Moſes* and the other ſacred writers of the Old Teſtament, their vaſt care and attention to teach and to hold forth at all times, that there is *one God only, and no other beſides him;* not *a God compoſed of many perſons*, which is *a thing of anti-chriſtian invention*, but a God in the ſingle perſon of Jehovah, God of Iſrael, God of the univerſe.

I am the more induced to name this, not only becauſe it is a truth that lies at the foundation, and is of the greateſt concernment; but alſo through a deſire to mention to you a late publication that may not have fallen in your way, of a reſpectable Swiſs gentleman among us; *Mr. De Luc*, who enjoys the office of Reader to the Queen,

and has been made by the King Profeſſor of philoſophy and geology in the univerſity of Gottingen, and who dedicates his tract, which is in the french language, to the king of Pruſſia. As I had been led to eſteem the author, I was concerned and much diſappointed, that he ſhould at this day, upon ſuch ſlight and imaginary grounds, ſet himſelf to deprive us of the one true God and father of the univerſe, and introduce in lieu of him, *a God* conſiſting of three perſons, the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, *in the unity of his eſſence*; alluding in ſupport of this to the text in 1 John v. 7, of the three heavenly witneſſes; a text now almoſt unanimouſly given up as ſpurious, and not written by the apoſtle. Of which ſentiment, the preſent biſhop of Lincoln, to the credit of his judgment and integrity, hath lately declared himſelf in expreſſive terms. "I purpoſely omit the conteſted paſſage in the firſt epiſtle of St. John: There are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the ſon and the holy ghoſt: and theſe three are one. In any caſe it would be improper to produce a doubtful text in ſupport of ſo important a doctrine as that of the trinity; but

I muſt

I muſt own, that after an attentive conſideration of the controverſy relative to that paſſage, I am convinced that it is ſpurious *."

Mr. De Luc farther grounds this doctrine of his on the plural termination of one of the hebrew names of God; where his words are, referring his reader to the language of Moſes in the beginning of Geneſis †; "The denomination of the Divinity, ſays he, is *plural*; that is *Elohim*, the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit in the unity of his eſſence* ‡."

* Elements of Chriſtian Theology, vol. ii. p. 90.

† "MOISE commence la GENESE par la fixation de ces idées, qui ——— ſont la baſe du Chriſtianiſme. Des ce début, dis-je, la denomination de la Divinité eſt un *plurier*; c'eſt ELOHIM; le *Pere*, la *Parole* et l' *Eſprit* dans l'unité de ſon ESSENCE."

Lettres ſur l'education religieuſe de l'enfance, precédées et ſuivies de détails hiſtoriques—dediées au Roi, par J. A. De Luc, Lecteur de ſa majeſté La Reine de la Grande Bretagne, Profeſſeur de philoſophie et géologie á Gottingue. A Berlin. 1800. pag. 138.

‡ See on this ſubject, Mr. Frend's excellent Animadverſions on the Elements of Chriſtian Theology, Letter XII. in which is a clear confutation of the vain ſuppoſition of a plurality of perſons in God from the uſe of a plural termination in one of his names. Ridgway. 1800.

After

After this, *Mr. De Luc* proceeds to confirm theſe poſitions, by referring (I give his words) to *Mr. Thomas Maurice*, one of the keepers of the Britiſh Muſeum; who, in his Indian Antiquities, lately publiſhed, profeſſes to find the doctrine of *a Trinity*, or † *plurality in the unity of God*, among thoſe nations of antiquity, who, he thinks, muſt have received it from anceſtors, that were in poſſeſſion of it, anterior to the time of *Moſes*; and thus furniſh a freſh authority, as is ſuppoſed, for the doctrine of *a Trinity in unity in God*, independent of the ſacred writings.

But both theſe arguments of theſe two learned gentlemen; the one, from the plural termination of Elohim, one of the hebrew names of God; the other from the high antiquity of the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity and Plurality in God; without going into any other confutation of them, are ſet aſide by the ſimple and moſt obvious conſideration furniſhed by *Moſes* and the Prophets, and the whole hebrew ſcriptures; namely, that *whenever God is introduced in the ſacred*

† Le même, p. 139.

writings,

writings, as ſpeaking of himſelf, or ſpoken of by others, or is himſelf addreſſed, the perſonal pronouns, I, thou, he, *are invariably uſed;* which demonſtrates to every underſtanding, that it is one ſingle perſon, and not more than one, who is the God of *Moſes* and the prophets and of the people of Iſrael, and conſequently the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and of all mankind.

This plain argument, which has been a thouſand times produced, it is to be hoped will at laſt have ſome little attention paid to it, being nothing leſs, to thoſe who reſpect the Scriptures, than the authority of God himſelf deciding the matter. For my part, I ſee more reaſon every day of my life, to be thankful for thoſe divine records, which have been preſerved to us by *Moſes* and the people of the Jews; as I fear, without them, what with the refinements of philoſophy, on the one hand, and the idolatrous ſuperſtition of chriſtians on the other, the one true God would have been overlooked and unknown. For theſe reaſons, honouring that moſt antient nation of the Jews with that high honour which is due to it, and grieved when I ſee

them undeſervedly ſcouted and deſpiſed and ill treated by Chriſtians, I am almoſt tempted, whenever I meet a Jew, to move my hat to him, as one to whom I am under infinite obligations, as a martyr and confeſſor to the one true God.

6. It had given me much diſturbance, that chriſtianity, which was uſhered into the world, as we read, with ſuch a profuſion and expence of miracles, and is moſt truly a ſcheme to conduct his creatures to virtue and true happineſs, worthy of the benevolent parent of mankind, ſhould not have better made its way, and ſhould have done ſo little to reform the world, than it has hitherto been found to have done: I have been formerly often ready to reject it on this account.

But you have helped much to quiet my mind, and have cured my ſcepticiſm in this reſpect, by pointing out in what manner theſe powerful means of true piety and virtue have been blunted and impeded, and the ſalutary effects of this excellent doctrine counteracted by the corruptions that have been grafted upon and blended with it; and chiefly by its

being poiſoned and perverted almoſt in its cradle as ſoon as the powers of the world began to give it their countenance, as an inſtrument of ambition and worldly deſigns and aggrandiſement; a ſervice which it diſdains; by which it is ſure to be polluted, and to have its true end and deſign of making men of all ranks and degrees virtuous and good, defeated; but a ſervice, in which, unfortunately, it is forced, more or leſs, to drudge, to this very hour.

Your account and illuſtration of the hiſtory of mankind, as delivered by *Moſes*, and of the divine government exerciſed over them from the beginning, and alſo of the uſeful moral purpoſes anſwered by the deluge, has at laſt removed all my difficulties. And I am now perſuaded that for theſe events which had appeared to me out of nature and all credibility, there was a juſt foundation in fact, and the concurring teſtimony of antiquity to their truth, to which no unprejudiced perſon could refuſe aſſent: and for this let me ſay, I was beholden to *Mr. Hume* himſelf; which ſhews how wiſe and prudent, as well as juſt and right in itſelf, it is to allow

the utmoſt latitude of diſcuſſion, and liberty of publiſhing their ſentiments to ingenious men on all ſubjects, eſpecially thoſe of religion, however contrary they may be to what is publicly received and believed.

For, in the reply of an excellent perſon to that gentleman's "Eſſay on Miracles," (which unqueſtionably is calculated and was intended to overthrow all belief of the divine revelation contained in the Bible, and of the chriſtian religion in particular, and has certainly influenced many unwary readers to turn away entirely from it,) there are given with much good temper and liberality, a ſolid confutation of his arguments againſt miracles, and a defence of the people of the jews, and of their ſacred hiſtory, in oppoſition to the ſubtle objections and attacks of this ſhrewd and bold adverſary, with much other important remark connected with it: all which the chriſtian world would have been deprived of, to their great loſs, had not *Mr. Hume* drawn it forth and given occaſion to this work.

I would

I would here refer you to " An Eſſay in anſwer to Mr. *Hume's* Eſſay on Miracles," by *William Adams*, M. A. Miniſter of St. Chad's, Salop. The ſecond edition, with additions. 1749.

Towards the cloſe of the work, Mr. (ſince the very eminent Dr.) *Adams* remarks: " The remainder of this Eſſay is little more than a rude inſult on the Scriptures and the *Chriſtian* religion. For fear his (Mr. *Hume's*) readers ſhould miſtake his meaning, and not apply his argument where he intended, the author proceeds, with a ſmiling grimace, to tell us, ' *that our moſt holy religion is founded on faith, not on reaſon; and it is a ſure method of expoſing it to put it to ſuch a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure.*' This he pretends to make evident by examining the miracles related in the Pentateuch." ' Here' ſays he, ' we are to conſider a book preſented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people, wrote in an age when they were ſtill more barbarous, and, in all probability, long after the facts it relates, corroborated by no concurring teſtimony, and reſembling thoſe fabulous accounts which

every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading this book we find it full of prodigies and miracles: it gives an account of a ſtate of the world and of human nature intirely different from the preſent; of our fall from that ſtate; of the age of man extended to near a thouſand years; of the deſtruction of the world by a deluge; of the arbitrary choice of one people as the favorites of heaven, and that people the countrymen of the author; of their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the moſt aſtoniſhing imaginable: I deſire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and, after ſerious conſideration, declare, whether he thinks that the falſhood of ſuch a book, ſupported by ſuch a teſtimony would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the miracles it relates; which is, however neceſſary to make it be received, according to the meaſures of probability above eſtabliſhed.'—*So far* Mr. Hume's *repreſentation of the contents of the Bible.*

Reply to the above by Dr. Adams.

" If the Jews were thus more than barbarous at the time when theſe books were written,

written, whence, without a miracle, could they learn all the great truths relating to the being and attributes of God, which the moſt learned part of the world were for many ages after in total ignorance about? Whence could the religion and laws of this people ſo far exceed thoſe of the wiſeſt Heathen, and come out at once, in their firſt infancy, thus perfect and intire; when all human ſyſtems are found to grow up by degrees, and to ripen after many improvements, into perfection? The Jews had but little commerce with other nations, and, therefore, did not excel in the literary and other arts of Greece: but the ſame ſcriptures, which prove that they were earlier in poſſeſſion of the moſt uſeful and ſublime parts of knowlege, ſecured them likewiſe from ever ſinking into that barbarity which the author charges upon them. Let any one compare the book of *Geneſis*, which he treats with ſo much freedom, and which is, by many centuries, the oldeſt book in the world, with any of the earlieſt heathen hiſtorians; let him compare the Pſalms of *David* with the Hymns of *Callimachus* or *Orpheus*; let him read the hiſtory of *Joſephus*, who was juſt contemporary with *Chriſt* and his

Apoſtles; and he will incline to judge more favorably of this people.

"The great events recorded in this hiſtory have no connection with the argument of miracles, and, therefore, do not belong to this place. But theſe are corroborated by the ſtrongeſt concurring teſtimony that can be deſired to facts that are, moſt of them, older than the uſe of letters itſelf. The traditions of every country ſeem all to point to one and the ſame original. The late invention of arts and ſciences, the foundation of cities and empires, the manner of peopling the world, and the number of its preſent inhabitants, ſeem all to prove that the world had its beginning no earlier than the period aſſigned by *Moſes*, and agree perfectly with the account of the deluge. There are no monuments of antiquity which give room to ſuſpect the world of earlier original. The firſt authors of Greece and Egypt ſpeak of the chaos, of the abyſs of waters that covered the earth, of man's being formed out of the ground, and of his firſt innocence. From theſe, one of the *Latin* poets has deſcribed the creation, the ſtate of innocence, the gradual

gradual corruption of mankind, and the deluge, in a manner very nearly reſembling that of *Moſes*. The memory of a general flood, which deſtroyed the whole race of men and animals, except one family, ſeems to have been preſerved for ſome ages among almoſt all nations. *Lucian* tells us, the tradition among both the *Greeks* and *Syrians* was, that this was a judgment from heaven on the wickedneſs of mankind: he deſcribes the manner of the flood, the ark in which ſome of every kind were preſerved, and many other particulars, juſt as we have them in the book of *Geneſis*. *Plutarch*, alluding to the ſame tradition, mentions the ark, and even the dove that was ſent forth to ſee if the waters were abated. A great number of antient authors, who mention the deluge, and give witneſs to the building of *Babel*, the burning of Sodom, and many other great events in the *Moſaic* hiſtory, are reckoned up by *Joſephus*, *Grotius*, and others. The preſent ſurface of the earth, the ſhells of fiſh that are found in midland countries, and even on the tops of mountains, and the remains of land-animals at very great depths in the earth, are ſtill ſurviving monuments

of

of the deluge. It is almoſt certain that the world began to be peopled about the plains of *Babylon*, and near where the ark is ſaid to have reſted. From the eaſt, colonies of men were ſent weſtward: and from thence we can trace pretty diſtinctly the progreſs of arts and ſciences. The long lives of the firſt men are ſpoken of by all the Heathens. This fact is ſo far from diſcrediting the *Moſaic* hiſtory, that Monſieur *Paſcal* reckons it a full proof of the fidelity of the author: 'This hiſtorian,' ſays he, 'has brought the deluge, and even the creation, ſo near his own time, by means of the few generations which he counts between them, that the memory of them could not but be ſtill freſh and lively in the minds of all the Jewiſh nation.' In the line of tradition there are but five ſteps betwixt *Moſes* and the firſt man. 'Therefore, the creation and the deluge are indubitably true. This argument' ſays he, 'muſt be acknowleged for concluſive by thoſe who apprehend its proceſs.' "The longevity of men in the firſt ages ſeems neceſſary for the better peopling the world, the invention and improvement of arts, and for propagating religious and all uſeful knowlege, when they depended

depended wholly on tradition. And I am perſuaded that this author cannot even invent a more probable or rational account of peopling the world than this which he affects to deride."

You have not been deficient in bearing teſtimony to the character of *Abraham, the friend of God,* as he is termed by high authority; though without aſcribing to him that perfection which belongs not to him. In taking a concubine, he did no more than conform to a cuſtom which was very general in thoſe early times, and not diſreputable. Nor was there any thing wrong or unkind in his diſmiſſion of *Hagar,* on the complaint of her miſtreſs and for peace' ſake; ſince there is every reaſon to believe, from the ſubſequent hiſtory of *Iſhmael,* and particularly as we find him afterwards joined with *Iſaac* in paying the laſt tribute of affection and duty to the remains of his father, that neither *Hagar* nor her ſon were thrown upon the world neglected and forlorn.

But you have not touched upon his obedience to the divine command to ſlay his only ſon;

ſon; which may give us pauſe; and is by ſome much condemned; and yet when duly examined and underſtood, we ſhall find that *Abraham* therein manifeſted the nobleſt principles of piety and virtue, worthy of the high commendations and reward with which he was honored by the almighty.

Theſe principles were a truſt in the power and goodneſs of God, in preference to every tender feeling of nature, and every worldly conſideration that might ſhake his reſolution of complying with what he was perſuaded to be the divine command: although it was not a blind obedience that he paid; but grounded on the higheſt reaſon. This the Apoſtle tells us, Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. *By faith Abraham when he was tryed, offered up Iſaac, and he that had received the promiſes, offered up his only ſon of whom it was ſaid, that in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called*; i. e. though he had a promiſe from God, that his poſterity was to be derived from *Iſaac*, on receiving this divine command he heſitated not to make a ſacrifice of him; *accounting that God was able to raiſe him up from the dead; from whence alſo he received him in a figure*, or rather,

rather, *as from a like condition he had received him*, as it is better rendered by Mr. *Wakefield*, referring, in theſe laſt words, to the miraculous birth of *Iſaac*, when his parents were paſt child-bearing, *as good as dead*, as the apoſtle, Heb. xi. 12. expreſſes himſelf, in another place.

There is a ſermon from theſe words by Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, preached at *Whitehall*, in 1686, before the princeſs Ann; entitled on the excellency of *Abraham's* faith and obedience, highly worthy of peruſal; in which after ſhewing on what ſolid and good grounds *Abraham* acted, and conducted himſelf, in obeying the divine command, and what a pattern of piety and virtue he therein was; that great and good man, and eminent preacher and teacher, makes the following inferences from the whole: with which I promiſe myſelf you will be pleaſed as I have been, as they ſhew this excellent perſon's method of reaſoning, and the ſound and liberal principles he goes upon. And as they are of importance in weighing and examining this much controverted action of *Abraham*, and in vindicating the character of the father

of

of the Hebrew nation, I hope you will not be offended with their prolixity; he infers then,

" *Firſt*, Humane nature is capable of full and clear ſatisfaction concerning a divine revelation. For if *Abraham* had not been fully and paſt all doubt aſſured that this was a command from God, he would certainly have ſpared his ſon. And nothing is more reaſonable than to believe that thoſe, to whom God is pleaſed to make immediate revelations of his will, are ſome way or other aſſured that they are divine; otherwiſe they would be in vain, and to no purpoſe.

" But how men are aſſured concerning divine revelations made to them, is not ſo eaſy to make out to others; only theſe two things we are ſure of:

1. " That God can work in the mind of man, a firm perſuaſion of the truth of what he reveals, and that ſuch a revelation is from him. This no man can doubt of, that conſiders the great power and influence, which God who made us, and perfectly knows our frame,

frame, muſt needs have upon our minds and underſtandings.

2. " That God never offers any thing to any man's belief, that plainly contradicts the natural eſſential notions of his mind; becauſe this would be for God to deſtroy his own workmanſhip, and to impoſe that upon the underſtanding of man, which, whilſt it remains what it is, it cannot poſſibly admit.

" For inſtance, we cannot imagine, that God ſhould reveal to any man any thing that plainly contradicts the eſſential perfections of the divine nature; for ſuch a revelation can no more be ſuppoſed to be from God, than a revelation from God that there is no God; which is a downright contradiction.

" Now to apply this to the revelation which God made to *Abraham* concerning the ſacrificing of his ſon: This was made to him by an audible voice, and he was fully ſatisfied by the evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

" For

"For this was not the firſt of many revelations that had been made to him, ſo that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and by this experience was grown to a great confidence in the truth and goodneſs of God. And it is very probable the firſt time that God appeared to *Abraham*, becauſe it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future revelations, God did ſhew himſelf to him in ſo glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his conviction.

"And this *St. Stephen* does ſeem to inſinuate, Acts vii. 2. *The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Meſopotamia.* Now by this glorious appearance to him at firſt, he was ſo prepared for the entertainment of after-revelations, that he was not ſtaggered even at this, concerning the ſacrificing of his own ſon, being both by the manner it, and the aſſurance that accompanied it, fully ſatisfied that it was from God.

"*Secondly.* I obſerve from hence the great and neceſſary uſe of reaſon in matters of

of faith. For we ſee here that *Abraham's* reaſon was a mighty ſtrengthening and help to his faith. Here were two revelations made to *Abraham*, which ſeemed to claſh with one another; and if Abraham's reaſon could not have reconciled the repugnancy of them, he could not poſſibly have believed them both to be from God; becauſe this natural notion or principle, that *God cannot contradict himſelf*, every man does firſt, and more firmly believe, than any revelation whatſoever.

"Now *Abraham's* reaſon relieved him in this ſtrait. So the text expreſsly tells us, *he reaſoned* with himſelf, that God was able to raiſe his ſon from the dead.

"And this being admitted, the command of God, concerning the ſlaying of Iſaac, was very well conſiſtent with his former promiſe to *Abraham*, that *In Iſaac his ſeed ſhould be called.*"

So far the good Archbiſhop.

I ſhall be indulged, I know, in adding one or two things.

1. From the account of the divine command to *Abraham* to ſlay his ſon, of the deſign of it, and of the execution of it being prevented, as the whole of it lies in the ſacred hiſtory, an unbiaſſed well diſpoſed mind would conclude that the Deity thereby intended to promote and encourage piety and virtue; nor could it naturally have any other tendency, or bear any other conſtruction.

2. Diſtreſſed as *Abraham* muſt have been on receiving ſuch a command, he had no doubts whatſoever of it being his duty to obey it; as he was perſuaded, and rightly perſuaded, that God could command nothing but what was right and good.

All that could be neceſſary to ſatisfy his mind, was to be perfectly aſſured that the command came from God; and that of this he had the fulleſt conviction, we have juſt now ſeen.

3. It is not for his own information, that God, who knows before-hand what each perſon will do, makes trial of his creatures; or puts difficulties and embarraſſments before

them in the way of their duty; but to ſtrengthen and confirm their virtuous principles, and make them examples, and an encouragement to each other.

4. No one can take upon him to deny that God might thus make trial of the piety and virtuous principles of *Abraham*, without denying at the ſame time his power and right to govern the world as ſeems good to him, and to fit its rational inhabitants by moral diſcipline for the ſeveral parts he deſtines them to act and fill in it; in ſhort, without denying all miraculous interpoſitions whatſoever, all interference of the Deity in teaching and directing his creatures beyond what they can learn from obſervations on the preſent eſtabliſhed courſe of things, and the laws by which the natural ſyſtem is governed and preſerved: A moſt vain aſſumption, aſſuredly, this, in mortal man, whoſe ignorance is ſo great, and judgment ſo weak and incompetent! which implies on the face of it, that he is wiſer than God; which is the next ſtep to denying that there is any God at all, and which has led not a few into that bewildered and deſolate ſtate of mind, of which, and I

thank you for it, at our laſt meeting, you gave us ſome wretched and melancholy examples.

You will bear with me going on, my friends, now I have begun, in ſuggeſting to you, that you have left untouched a main difficulty, which chriſtianity puts in the way of your attempt to vindicate the divine goodneſs, by its teaching the doctrine of endleſs puniſhments to the wicked, although you have prepared the way for removing the difficulty, by your manner of explaining the divine moral government under which we are. For you have well ſhewn that under this, all events, reſpecting all of us, are ſo directed and overruled, that piety and virtue, or obedience to the divine laws, is its own reward, and promotes our happineſs, and vice, or diſobedience, is its own puniſhment, and produces miſery. And in agreement with this our moral conſtitution, we find, that grievous and exquiſitely painful as are at times the ſufferings both of mind and body to which we are made liable by our violation of the divine commands, theſe ſufferings are nevertheleſs beneficial to us; we ſhould have

been

been worſe characters, and leſs happy upon the whole, without ſuch checks and reproofs. They tend to ſoften and ſubdue our pride and ſelfiſhneſs, which are the ſource of well nigh all our miſery and wickedneſs, and force us to ſober reflection, to ſee and correct our evil tempers and practices.

And as in our next ſtate after death we continue under the ſame laws and divine moral government, we cannot but conclude that thoſe moſt laſting puniſhments, which both reaſon and revelation conſpire to teach us, will in that future ſtate, await all evil doers, enemies of God and goodneſs, muſt in the progreſs of infinite ages produce a change and amendment in their diſpoſitions and a return to virtue and goodneſs; unleſs their Maker, by a ſovereign act of power hardens their hearts and prevents the natural effect of their ſufferings.

But this is ſuch an idea of God, that one would much ſooner believe there was no ſuch Being than ſuppoſe he could be capable of any thing of the kind, and therefore we may conclude without heſitation, that the ſuffer-

ings of the future ſtate muſt have a beneficial effect on the ſufferers.

I would alſo further ſubmit to your conſideration, that as the chriſtian ſcriptures aſſure us that all the dead ſhall be raiſed to life to be judged according to their works, as they have done good or evil in the preſent life; and do thereby implicitly give us hope, may we not rather ſay, give us humble aſſurance that the gloomy ſentence of annihilation will not paſs on any of our ſpecies, for we cannot entertain the thought that our benevolent creator would bring back his creatures to life to put them on the rack as it were, and make them ſuffer for a time, and then conſign them to their primitive nothing: We may therefore make this inference, that none of the human race, however multiplied and aggravated their crimes may have been, will be conſigned to fruitleſs unavailing ſuffering and miſery for ever, but in the long courſe of ages, and by the diſcipline to which they will be doomed, all will be brought to repentance, and be ſaved. I muſt however profeſs that thoſe ſevere threatenings of the Goſpel of eternal puniſhments,

have

have long ſince ceaſed to make any impreſſion on my mind, being counterbalanced by the contrary declarations ſo frequently occurring concerning the Almighty; that he loveth all his creatures, and is deſirous that they ſhould not periſh, (John iii. 16.) but have everlaſting life; that he would (1 Tim. ii. 4.) have all men to be ſaved and come to the knowlege of the truth; to be ſaved, i. e. made happy, which muſt imply they will be ſo in the end: As it would otherwiſe argue that he has not the power to effect the good he deſires, and ſo muſt be diſappointed, which is not to be ſuppoſed of him, who is ſupremely perfect both in power and goodneſs.

I ſhall have reaſon to think myſelf happy, adds *Syneſius*, here riſing up, if I have not tired you all by taking up ſo much of your time, and if my remarks, all of them in ſome meaſure of your own growth, may not be judged foreign to your noble deſign of vindicating the ways of God to man.

Very far from it, declared *Photinus* with a countenance full of pleaſure, in finding their

old aſſociate come forward to take ſuch an important ſhare in their preſent debates; you have done us honour, and I will venture to ſay, have given great ſatisfaction to all of us, not merely in approving the progreſs we have made in our inquiry, but in corroborating and illuſtrating it with many new obſervations of great moment; eſpecially in what you have done towards relieving the goſpel from the imputation of holding forth the doctrine of everlaſting torments of the wicked, a milſtone which ſome miſtaken chriſtians had hung about it, and thereby alienated the minds of many.

I perſuade myſelf, continued *Photinus*, that it would have been impoſſible for chriſtians to put ſuch a conſtruction upon the words of their great Maſter, ſo repugnant to every idea we can form of the divine Being, that men would be condemned to endleſs ſufferings for the crimes of this brief paſſing ſtate, if their underſtandings had not been quite overawed and overpowered by taking for granted that the language and words uſed by *Chriſt* on the ſubject, *eternal*, *everlaſting*, *for ever*, and the like, implied an endleſs duration ſo directly

rectly and abſolutely, as to forbid all further inquiry or doubt about their meaning. Whereas, in fact, the terms generally ſignify periods of duration, more or leſs extended, and have at no time this ſignification, unleſs when determined to it by the ſubject to which they are applied; viz. God, his mercy or goodneſs, and the like.

So that our Saviour, in uſing this language, intended only to expreſs, that the ſufferings of the future ſtate would be of an exceeding long duration; thereby to inculcate and inforce the neceſſity and vaſt importance of the attention of mankind to the divine laws, and the moſt dreadful danger of violating them; of going out of the world under the power of evil, malignant, ungodly diſpoſitions and habits: And this from the moſt benevolent motive, that they might be powerfully excited to avoid thoſe exquiſite ſufferings and miſeries of the next ſtate, which although they will have an end, as we have been ſhewing, yet it will be then only, when their evil diſpoſitions ſhall be changed, and amended.

It

It is of importance here to be noted, that in that fine affecting deſcription of the day of judgment, at the concluſion of Matt. xxv. the *everlaſting puniſhment* expreſsly denounced againſt thoſe who oppoſed the ſpread of the goſpel, was neceſſary for their own good and that of all the world, this being the means appointed by the divine Being for the reformation, virtue, and final happineſs of the human race for ever. Wherefore an oppoſition to it was of ſo heinous a nature, that no threatning could be too ſtrong to deter men from it.

But we are not to conclude that *everlaſting puniſhment* means puniſhment without end, but only ſuch as was to remain till the evil was done away by repentance; for neither the language uſed, nor the reaſon of the thing admits of any other ſenſe. The phraſe everlaſting fire, not literally ſuch, but this moſt dreadful image adopted to keep men from that hardneſs of heart, and inſenſibility to the temporal and eternal good of others, which while it laſts, incapacitates for pure happineſs both in this world and in the next.

And now in concluſion, what has frequently ſatisfied my own mind, on this momentous concluding point, the final happineſs of all mankind, I cannot help propoſing to your conſideration, from the ſecond volume, p. 424, of Dr. Hartley's works; a writer of ſuch compaſs of mental diſcernment, and true chriſtian philoſophy, as has no competitor, and ſhall in his words cloſe our converſation.

"Can it be ſuppoſed, that an infinitely merciful Father will caſt off his Son entirely, and doom him to eternal miſery, without farther trials than what this life affords? We ſee numberleſs inſtances of perſons at preſent abandoned to vice, who yet according to all probable appearances, might be reformed by a proper mixture of correction, inſtruction, hope and fear. And what man is neither able nor willing to do, may and muſt, as ſhould ſeem, be both poſſible to God, and actually effected by him. He muſt have future diſcipline of a ſevere kind for thoſe whom the chaſtiſements of this life did not bring to themſelves. Yet ſtill they will all be fatherly chaſtiſements, intended to amend

and

and perfect, not to be final and vindictive. That the bulk of ſinners are not utterly incorrigible, even common obſervation ſhews, but the Hiſtory of Aſſociation makes it ſtill more evident; and it ſeems very repugnant to analogy to ſuppoſe that any ſinners, even the very worſt that ever lived, ſhould be hardened beyond the reach of all ſuffering, of all ſelfiſhneſs, hope, fear, goodwill, gratitude, &c. For we are all alike in kind, and do not differ greatly in degree here. We have each of us paſſions of all ſorts, and lie open to influences of all ſorts; ſo as that the perſons A. and B. in whatever different proportions their intellectual affections now exiſt, may, by a ſuitable ſet of impreſſions, become hereafter alike.

"Theſe, and many ſuch like reaſonings, muſt occur to attentive perſons upon this ſubject, ſo as to make it highly unſuitable to the benevolence of the Deity, or to the relation which he bears to us, according to the mere light of nature, that infinite irreverſible miſery, to commence at death, ſhould be the puniſhment of the ſins of this life. And by purſuing

purſuing this method of reaſoning, we ſhall be led firſt to exclude miſery upon the balance, and then to hope for the ultimate unlimited happineſs of all mankind."

CON-

CONVERSATION THE LAST.

THE ſubjects of the former converſations occupied the attention of the company for ſome time at the next meeting, when it was obſerved to *Marcellinus*, that in a former converſation *, when he was pointing to the cauſes of the great miſery and wickedneſs which are complained of in the world, he had named one with which Revelation alone acquaints us, viz. the baneful influence and interference of an Evil Being, called the Devil or Satan, in the affairs of men; but had ſince been wholly ſilent about it, as if it were a thing deſerving no conſideration.

It ſeems to me, obſerved here *Syneſius*, that it is not to be thus ſlightly paſſed over For although you, *Marcellinus*, have ſatisfactorily proved, that nature rightly underſtood holds forth only good; that the pains and ſufferings, at which we murmur ſo

* Page 123.

loudly,

loudly, are kindly intended and in general beneficial to us, and we ſhould not be ſo happy as we are at preſent without them; and even ſin and wickedneſs are by the divine wiſdom and mercy converted to good; nevertheleſs, as revelation is generally underſtood to teach, and the goſpel in particular by many aſſerted to be founded upon the reality of ſuch an Evil Being, and ſuch unqueſtionably has the appearance of being a principal agent throughout the New Teſtament; how much ſoever the thing may be made light of by ſome as utterly improbable and inconſiſtent with every idea we can form of the divine goodneſs, your vindication of that goodneſs will be lame and defective, unleſs you can ſhew the inſufficiency of theſe preſumed divine authorities to prove the exiſtence of ſuch a foul malignant fiend, which not a few chriſtians with great earneſtneſs maintain.

As therefore you have done me the favour to take in good part the remarks I preſumed to offer in the diſcuſſion in which you are engaged, I ſhall be happy if the thoughts which I have with ſome diligence put together

ther on the preſent ſubject, meet with your approbation.

The company expreſſed high ſatisfaction, and *Syneſius* continued his addreſs.

It is ſomewhat extraordinary that in the hiſtory of the tranſgreſſion of the firſt parents of mankind, at the beginning of our ſacred books, it ſhould be ſo very generally current with the learned as well as the unlearned, that by the ſerpent, who is repreſented as miſleading them to violate the command of their maker, we are to underſtand, a wicked ſpirit, the ſuppoſed enemy and oppoſer of God, and author of all evil; when at the ſame time, *Moſes*, who gives us the account of the tranſaction, never intimates that it is ſo to be underſtood, in this, or in any other part of his writings.

Neither, it is obſervable, do the learned jewiſh writers, who were contemporary with the apoſtles of Chriſt, and whoſe writings happily remain, give into this interpretation; but generally ſuppoſed the ſerpent to ſignify men's depraved appetites and paſſions, or

whatever, in their ſituations, could move and entice our firſt parents to do evil and ſin againſt God.

That *Moſes* himſelf did not intend to deſcribe the evil being called the devil, to have deceived *Eve* under the ſhape of a ſerpent, appears farther from his never making mention of ſuch an evil being as having any exiſtence at all then, or alluding to it afterwards in the five books aſcribed to him. Whence we may reaſonably conclude that he did not know or believe that there was any ſuch powerful miſchievous being, who had connexion with mankind; becauſe, had he known it, he would not have failed to apprize his nation of it, and warn them of their danger from him.

We muſt own indeed, that there is mention made of *devils*, in Leviticus xvii. 7. where it is ſaid, *They ſhall no more offer their ſacrifices unto* devils; *after whom they have gone a whoring*; and in Deuteronomy xxxii. 17. we read, *They ſacrificed unto* devils, *not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers*

feared not. This however, in either caſe, is not the language of *Moſes*, but of his tranſlators; who, knowing theſe to be the names of heathen gods, whom they took to be evil ſpirits, on that account gave them the name of *devils*, inſtead of preſerving their true names, which they ought to have done.

The word uſed in the original, in the firſt inſtance, שעירם, ſoirm, ſignifies goats, hairy beings, the ſacred animals of Egypt, worſhipped by them with the moſt obſcene rites. The other name in Deuteronomy, שדים, ſdim, is from a root that ſignifies to deſolate, to lay waſte, to deſtroy, a proper characteriſtic of the gods of Canaan, who were of later date, ſuppoſed to be deceaſed kings and mighty warriors, who were worſhipped by human ſacrifices, and with whom the Iſraelites had become more lately acquainted; and for their compliance in this horrid worſhip, they are here and elſewhere ſeverely reproved. See particularly Pſalm cvi. 37, 38. *Yea, they ſacrificed their ſons and their daughters unto* devils, (שדים, ſdim, demons, dead men deified;) *and ſhed innocent blood, even the blood*

of

of their ſons and their daughters, whom they ſacrificed unto the idols of Canaan *.

It is not to be paſſed over here, that *familiar ſpirits* are ſpoken of in the books of *Moſes*, and other parts of the ſacred hiſtory. And as this is preſumed to have a reference to devils and witches, ignorant perſons may thereby be impoſed upon to think there is ſome reality in ſuch things. But it ſhould be told them, that the term *familiar ſpirit*, has nothing to anſwer it in the original, but was put in of their own heads by the learned men employed in the laſt tranſlation of the Bible by authority, in the time of *James* I. ſoon after he came to the throne, to favour ſome notions of the king's about theſe matters; and in complaiſance to him alſo in this reſpect, the laws of the country were made more ſevere againſt the ſuperſtitious practices of ſorcery and witchcraft. We are told that king *James* himſelf came

* Levit. xix. 31. xx. 6.
Deut. xviii. 11. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, 7, 8, 9.
2 Kings xxi. 6. xxiii. 24.
1 Chron. x. 13. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.
Iſaiah viii. 19. xxix. 4.

off very much from theſe notions in his elder years; yet as a wiſe and excellent perſon obſerves *, from whom I have this account; " when Laws and tranſlations are fixed, it is a difficult thing to change them."

It may be neceſſary here to obviate a common prejudice, that the Hebrew word Satan, to which correſponds the Greek word διαβολος, *diabolus*, by which it is generally rendered in the Greek verſion of the Old Teſtament; that theſe words ſtand for the ſuppoſed evil being, as his proper name; which is by no means the caſe. For in their firſt and proper ſenſe, they ſignify an enemy, adverſary, calumniator, or the like; and to this ſenſe we ſhall always do well to adhere, unleſs the circumſtances of the paſſage demand the contrary.

Thus Numb. xxii. 22, we read, *And* GOD's *anger was kindled becauſe he* (Balaam) *went; and the angel of the* LORD *ſtood in the way for an* adverſary (Satan) *againſt him.* 2 Sam. xix. 22. *And David ſaid, What have I to*

† See Dr. Hutchinſon on Witchcraft, pages 178, 179, 180.

do with you, ye ſons of Zeruiah, that ye ſhould this day be adverſaries (Satan) *unto me.* In theſe and any the like paſſages, every one will judge for himſelf, whether any thing more is to be underſtood than the plain conſtruction of the words implies, without any farther reference.

1 Chron. xxi. 1. *And an* adverſary (Satan) *ſtood up againſt Iſrael, and provoked David to number Iſrael.*	2 Sam. xxiv. 1. *And again the anger of the* LORD *was kindled againſt Iſrael, and he moved David againſt them to ſay, Go, number Iſrael and Judah.*

The parallel paſſages explain each other.

Satan, provoking David to number Iſrael, was the advice of an enemy; the ſuggeſtions of pride and vain confidence in the ſtrength and power of his dominions, and of odious ingratitude to God in leaving him, to whom all was owing, out of his thoughts, and out of the account.

Zechariah iii. 1, 2. *And he ſhewed me Joſhua the high prieſt, ſtanding before the*

angel of the LORD, *and* Satan *ſtanding at his right hand to reſiſt him. And the* LORD *ſaid unto* Satan, *The* LORD *rebuke thee,* O Satan, *even the* LORD *that hath choſen Iſrael rebuke thee.*

Joſhua the high prieſt is in this paſſage ſtirred up to ſet about the building of the temple under the promiſe of divine aſſiſtance. The Samaritans (Prideaux, Vol. I.) who oppoſed the building, are ſtyled Satan the adverſary. Probably the prophet meant no more by the LORD, Jehovah, ſpeaking to the adverſary, than that Jehovah would rebuke and reſtrain him.

Archbiſhop Newcome, in his Tranſlation of the Minor Prophets, ſhews, that in this paſſage, the term Satan ſignifies only *adverſary*, without any reference to an evil ſpirit.

Job i. ii. Satan being never mentioned but in the introduction to this poem, would ſeem to be a fictitious perſonage; a kind of poetical embelliſhment of the piece. He is moreover not characterized as an evil being; not tempting or ſeducing to evil, only aſking leave

leave to inflict pain and misfortune, thereby to make trial of Job's piety and virtuous principle. And Job and his friends throughout aſcribe his calamities to God immediately; and ſeem to have had no thought of an evil being, Satan, whom they never name, nor drop any hint of his agency in human affairs.

I have now conſidered all thoſe paſſages that ſeem needful to be produced, and are ſuppoſed to exhibit and hold forth the exiſtence and agency of an evil Being in the Jewiſh ſcriptures, but have not found that they expreſsly teach, or that it is to be gathered from them, that there is any ſuch being. And it is no ſmall confirmation that theſe ſcriptures have been rightly interpreted by us, as we perceive not in them any religious exhortations or cautions to beware of the wiles and power of ſuch an evil being, in their ſacred hiſtory and prophetic writings, from firſt to laſt.

Now, as in the chriſtian ſcriptures, in which ſo much is ſpoken of the devil, of ſatan, and the evil one, it is certain that we

have no new revelation of the reality of the evil being who is ſuppoſed to be deſcribed under theſe different names; and it has been ſhewn that the Jews could not take the opinion which they appear to hold of ſuch a being in the time of Chriſt, from their own ſacred books; it follows, that it muſt have come among them, during their diſperſion and captivity in Babylon. And moſt probably they learned it of the Chaldeans, among whom they dwelt; whoſe early reception of this doctrine is teſtified by many antient authors.

And that this was an opinion of great antiquity in the eaſt is confirmed by the prophet Iſaiah xlv. xlvi. where he ſpeaks of *Cyrus*, king of Perſia, many years before he was born, as the future reſtorer of the Jewiſh temple, in terms of alluſion to their eaſtern doctrine of Two principles of all things, a good and evil one; but in ſuch a way as effectually to ſet aſide and confute their error, by aſſerting that evil as well as good came from God alone.

Iſaiah xlv. ver. 8. *I form the light and create darkneſs: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all theſe things.*

The

The Iſraelites, ever prone to adopt the principles and practices of their heathen neighbours, ſojourning among theſe Chaldeans, famous for ſcience and natural knowlege, would moſt probably learn of them and adopt the notions of their conquerors; who might point out to them, or they might themſelves imagine, that the ſerpent who is repreſented as acting ſuch a principal part in their own ſacred hiſtory, was the evil principle of the Chaldeans, and thence they would proceed to aſcribe to it all the ſin and miſery that was in the world.

It may be preſumed alſo that by their conſtant intercourſe and communication with this learned people they imbibed their whole philoſophy concerning demons, and good and evil ſpirits, as well as the exiſtence of one chief evil ſpirit: So that at their return from their long captivity in Babylon, they had incorporated theſe doctrines into their theology, as being thoſe of their own ſacred writings, although theſe writings not only taught them nothing of the kind; but continually condemned them. And although by the time that Chriſt made his appearance,

they were much come off from ſuch a heatheniſh doctrine, yet their language, which had been framed and accommodated to it, would remain in common uſe, and to that our Saviour and his apoſtles would confirm themſelves, though there be no good reaſon to think that either the one or the other gave credit to the reality of this evil being.

It being however thus the popular belief, that all ſin and evil was from Satan, the devil, or the evil one, the apoſtles of Chriſt having to deſcribe how and by what hard trials and temptations their great Maſter's piety and virtue were exerciſed and ſtrengthened, to fit him for his arduous and important office of Saviour and Reformer, endowed with extraordinary divine powers to qualify him for it: According to the accounts of Matthew and Luke, who alone mention this ſingular tranſaction, it is Satan, the devil, in conformity to the general creed that all evil was from him, whom they deſcribe as the agent in this Trial or Temptation of Chriſt: Who is repreſented as employed in endeavouring to corrupt his virtue and integrity, by drawing him from his truſt and dependence upon

upon God alone, and prompting him to make uſe of his miraculous powers to gratify his own vanity and worldly views: Although no evil being whatſoever was concerned in the matter; which we are compelled to conclude from the utter improbability of the literal account, but which may otherwiſe be ſatisfactorily accounted for.

Let us then take into conſideration our Lord's ſentiments concerning Satan.

1. We may obſerve that Chriſt very commonly uſes the words Satan, Devil, in their proper and primary ſenſe, as ſignifying an enemy, adverſary, traitor, or the like; and not an evil being.

Matth. xvi. 23. *But he turned and ſaid unto Peter, Get thee behind me,* Satan! thou adverſary. Archbp. Newcome.

Mark viii. 33. *He rebuked* Peter, *ſaying, Get thee behind me,* Satan! thou adverſary. Archbp. Newcome.

John

John vi. 70. *Jeſus anſwered them, Have not I choſen you twelve, and one of you* is a devil; and yet one of you is a falſe accuſer.

2. There is no ground to conclude from Chriſt ſometimes uſing the terms, Satan, the Devil, the evil one, as ſignifying the ſuppoſed evil being, that he would thereby imply, or have others underſtand him to imply, that there was in reality ſuch an evil being.

This we learn from himſelf, in very many paſſages of the goſpel hiſtory.

Among others, I would mention his reply to his diſciples on their return from a commiſſion in which he had been employing them, to preach the goſpel of repentance and remiſſion of ſins, in his life time. When, upon their telling him with exultation, that by the power they derived from him, they had been enabled to heal diſeaſes, which in thoſe times were aſcribed to demons; Luke x. 17, 18. And the ſeventy returned again with joy, ſaying, Lord, even the demons are ſubject unto us through thy name; He ſaid unto

unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. In this anſwer, he foretels for their encouragement, the farther happy effects which would attend the preaching of his goſpel.

To fall from heaven, (ſee that fine deſcription of the king of Babylon, to which there is alluſion, Iſaiah xiv. 12.) is to be deprived of power and authority. How was Satan to loſe or be deprived of his power and authority by the preaching of the goſpel, which is calculated to change and to cure men's wicked and evil diſpoſitions, but cannot have any effect on Satan an inviſible, powerful, wicked being, ſuppoſing there were any ſuch? As this, then, is a thing impoſſible, we are unavoidably led to underſtand our Lord as expreſſing himſelf in the well known eaſtern ſtile, to which his diſciples and countrymen were accuſtomed, and to ſpeak of Satan, as a perſon, or living agent, when he thereby only meant thoſe ſelfiſh worldly deſires, that hatred of God and goodneſs, which are ſuppoſed to characterize ſuch a being. There is then, by Chriſt's own interpretation, no ſuch evil being as we call Satan or the Devil.

And

And Satan, or the Devil, is not a powerful evil being without us, but impious, malignant, cruel tempers and diſpoſitions within us, which lead us to ſin againſt God, and to hurt and deſtroy the peace, virtue and happineſs of our fellow-creatures.

3. This our Lord's ſentiment of the nullity of Satan or the devil, or the evil one, we find confirmed in other paſſages.

Luke viii. 12. *The* devil *cometh and taketh the word out of their hearts.*

Matth. xiii. 19. The evil one *cometh and ſnatcheth away that which was ſown in their hearts.*

Matth. xiii. 39. The enemy *that ſoweth the tares is the* devil,

Mark iv. 15. *Straightway cometh* Satan *and taketh away the word which was ſown in their hearts.*

Satan, the devil, the evil one that enters into men's hearts in theſe inſtances, can mean nothing

nothing but thoſe evil paſſions and worldly deſires, which extinguiſh the love of God, of truth and virtue in the hearts of men.

John xiii. 2.—the devil *having now put it into the heart of* Judas Iſcariot, Simon's *ſon to betray him.*

27. *And after the ſop, then* Satan *entered into him.*

Luke xxii. 3. *Then* Satan *entered into Judas Iſcariot.*

Pride, malice, diſappointment in thoſe worldly views which had led *Judas* at firſt to become one of Chriſt's diſciples, and mortification and revenge at finding the wickedneſs of his heart diſcovered; theſe were the Satan, the devil that entered into and rankled in the breaſt of this moſt unhappy man, and excited him to betray his beſt benefactor and friend, who anxiouſly ſought to make him good, into the hands of his enemies. For this black ingratitude he very ſoon openly condemned

condemned himſelf with bittereſt remorſe, "I have ſinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." Matth. xxvii. 4. In this declaration he furniſhes a ſtanding, perpetual teſtimony to the unſpotted excellency of our Lord's private character; to the reality of the miracles aſcribed to him, and to the truth of his religion, hardly to be reſiſted, which muſt pleaſe and affect every rational enquirer and lover of truth.

All the other inſtances in which our Lord uſes the term Satan, &c. admit of an eaſy explanation.

John viii. 44. *The devil is your father, and ye willingly perform the luſts of your father. He was a man-ſlayer from the firſt, and continued not in the truth, becauſe there is no truth in him.*

A ſlayer of men] in being the cauſe of the death of the firſt progenitors of the human race.

race. An allusion to the common opinion of the fall, *Gen.* iii. 5.

Luke xiii. 16. *And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

In the popular language of the Jews, diseases and infirmities were attributed to Satan. See also *Acts* x. 38.

Luke xxii. 31. *And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold! Satan hath obtained leave to sift you all like wheat.*

Our Lord warns his disciples of a great and dangerous trial being near; an allusion to the history of *Job*, i. 9—12.

Matth. xxv. 41—46. *Then will he also say to them on his left hand: Away from me ye cursed! into that everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Here is a reference to ſome fabulous ſtory, and moſt probably of heathen origin; for there is no mention in the ſcriptures of any ſuch beings, as a devil and his angels, except in this ſingle paſſage; for which, had there been any juſt foundation, it would not have been named in this paſſage only, and in ſuch an incidental way.

We find the prince of the powers of the air alluded to in *Epheſ.* ii. 1. *According to the Prince of the powers of the air*, which Archbiſhop Newcome tranſlates, *according to the powerful ruler of the air*; and then adds; St. Paul adopts this deſcription as well known to Jews and Gentiles without aſſerting its truth; as much as to ſay, according to the head of evil ſpirits, whom you Epheſians ſpeak of under this character. This points to the doctrine of evil ſpirits being a heathen doctrine, as we know from other ſources, to which our Lord might allude in the paſſage before us.

It has alſo been ably ſhewn by a French writer, in *Bekker* of Amſterdam's works, that the tranſlation of *Jude*, ver. 6, ſhould be, not

the *angels*, but the *meſſengers*, who kept not their firſt eſtate, &c.

And alſo the parallel paſſage, 2 *Pet.* ii. 4. ſhould be, not if God ſpared not the *angels*, but the *meſſengers* which ſinned, caſt them down to Hell, &c. And the ſame writer has clearly proved, that there is no reference here to fallen angels, but to the hiſtory of the perſons ſent out by *Moſes* to ſpy out and make report of the land of Canaan; and to their falſe and wicked account, ſo as to diſcourage their countrymen from obeying the divine command.

The Apoſtles of Chriſt, like their great Maſter, ſeem not to have underſtood that there was any devil, or evil being without them, whom men need to be afraid of, but only evil paſſions and worldly deſires, and the wickedneſs into which theſe lead them.

Acts v. 3. *Then ſaid Peter: Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to deceive the holy ſpirit?*

Here Satan was the vile, fraudulent and avaricious deſires that poſſeſſed him.

Acts xiii. 10. *O full of all guile, and of all craftineſs! Son of the Devil! enemy of all righteouſneſs.* i. e. reſembling ſuch a ſuppoſed being, not inſtigated by him.

Romans xvi. 20.—*and the God of peace will quickly trample Satan under your feet:* i. e. bad men, his inſtruments,] according to Dr. *Whitby*, the perſecuting Jews.

1 Cor. v. 5.—*to deliver ſuch an one to Satan.*

See *Luke* xiii. 16. 2 *Cor.* xii. 7. 1 *Tim.* i. 20. An alluſion perhaps to *Job* being put into Satan's power to inflict ſuffering upon him to a certain degree. Some bodily diſeaſe was to be inflicted, to bring the offender to repentance. This mode of puniſhment however was confined to the age of miracles. See Archbiſhop *Newcome* upon the place.

2 Cor. xi. 14. *And no wonder; for Satan himſelf putteth on the appearance of an angel of light.* Perhaps St. Paul had in view, *Job* i. 6.

Eph.

Eph. iv. 27.—*neither give place to the devil,* or as it is in Mr. *Wakefield*'s tranſlation, nor give any room to the accuſer.

vi. 11.—*ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil,* or, againſt the devices of the accuſer.

1 Theſſ. xi. 18. *Satan hindered us:* i. e. wicked men, inſtruments of evil.

2 Theſſ. xi. 9.—*according to the working of Satan;* — the operations of evil, with fraud and deluſion and falſe miracles.

1 Tim. iii. 6, 7.
2 Tim. ii. 26.

In theſe two paſſages *the ſnare of the devil,* ſhould be rendered, *the ſnare of the accuſer.*

1 Tim. v. 15.—*for ſome have already turned aſide after Satan*] that is, ſome women have behaved ill.

1 Peter v. 8. *Your adverſary the devil walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour*;] That is, ſpies and informers who accuſed them before the heathen magiſtrates.

1 John ii. 13. *Ye have overcome the wicked one*, by the power of chriſtian principles.

Archbiſhop *Newcome* * and Mr. *Wakefield*, the two laſt tranſlators of the New Teſtament,

* It is highly to the credit of Archbiſhop *Newcome*, that he leaves out of his tranſlation of the New Teſtament, the ſpurious text, 1 John v. 7. of the three heavenly witneſſes, the Father, the word, and the holy ghoſt, without any reſerves or intimations, as if the doctrine generally held to be contained in that text, was ſupported by other paſſages of Scripture; and that, at the ſame time, he gives ſuch a clear and intelligible explanation of the whole paſſage as ſhews that he himſelf made no ſuch concluſions from it,

It is not to be doubted, that if it had pleaſed the divine providence to ſpare Mr. Wakefield's moſt valuable life, he would have availed himſelf of the Archbiſhop's verſion in his own projected new edition, as the Archbiſhop had profited by his improvements. Indeed the pious and uſeful labours of this excellent prelate in illuſtrating the ſacred

ment, in their juſt and rational interpretations of the ſacred volume, have not found it neceſſary to bring in a ſuppoſed great evil ſpirit, or being, to ſolve the accounts that are given of the Devil or Satan which it contains, as the whole is more eaſily and naturally explained by conſidering theſe terms not as deſcriptive of any perſon or thing without us, but as referring to thoſe wicked paſſions and tempers within us, whence all evil proceeds. And theſe being ſufficient to account for the whole, it is wrong to ſeek or require any other cauſe.

So that the Devil or Satan is not any perſon or thing without us, but ſelfiſh, jealous, envious, malignant, cruel, impure, fraudulent,

ſacred volume, deſerve particular attention. And it is a great advantage in the preſent age, that from the verſions now given of the ſcriptures by perſons of great eminence in learning, every engliſh reader may attain to a competent and ſatisfactory knowlege of divine truth. It may be recommended to all families, who uſe the vulgar tranſlation made under the auſpices of James the firſt, to correct the prejudices which they have been led into from its various perverſions of the text, by comparing together this tranſlation with ſome other of our more valuable modern verſions.

ambitious, deſires and tempers indulged in us, and which tempted our firſt parents to ſin and diſobey the divine commands, and have unhappily induced their poſterity in all ages to follow the ſame evil courſes.

As to the interference of any evil being or ſpirit of a nature and powers ſuperior to mankind, we may not ſcruple to aſſert, from the declarations in our ſacred books, that there are no ſuch evil beings or ſpirits who have any concern with human affairs. All ſuch beings, who are recorded at any time to have had influence over mankind, have been of heathen device and invention, as has before been pointed out: ſuch, for inſtance, as St. Paul ſpeaks of in his epiſtle to the chriſtians of Epheſus, by the phraſe *the Prince of the powers of the air*, one of their objects of worſhip.

In all times, the more ignorant mankind have been of the one great author of nature, and of his works, and of thoſe holy writings which make farther revelation of him, the more have they been found to be addicted to ſuch blind and baneful ſuperſtition.

The

The ſum of what has been ſaid, is to vindicate the Scriptures from the imputation of teaching the exiſtence of a wicked Spirit, called the Devil or Satan, by ſhewing there is no ſuch being, but that the evil that is in the world is produced from men's evil paſſions and diſpoſitions, which are therefore called his works.

There is therefore no evil in the world but what takes its riſe from men themſelves:

Nor any devils but ſo far as men extremely wicked and abandoned may deſerve the name.

And to uphold ſuch evil beings is to engraft heatheniſm upon chriſtianity *.

To

* The Rev. Thomas Belſham, my honored and much eſteemed friend, has in an able general way, in his Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatiſe, p. 34, ſhewn the falſity of the opinion vulgarly entertained on evil ſpirits, and in his convincing manner, proved it to be contrary to the principles of philoſophy and the uniform tenor of the ſcriptures. The whole work is admirably calculated to remove various other errors.

The world is alſo indebted to the ſame author for a late publication intitled " Elements of the Philoſophy of the

To theſe concluſions the whole company gave their hearty concurrence, and after ſome converſation, repeated their thanks to Syneſius for the clearneſs with which he had ſummed up this ſuppoſed intricate queſtion.

Theſe repeated friendly conferences here ended, and the party then ſeparated to return to their reſpective homes, and duties, more fully impreſſed with their obligation as Chriſtians, to ſtudy the word, and works of God, to add practice to knowlege, and to communicate to others that light and truth, which lead to eternal life.

the mind," where candor to his opponents, and a clear expoſition of his own ſyſtem, evince his ſuperior talents; and the deep piety of his own mind; both of which, with a moſt exact critical knowlege of the ſcriptures, qualify him as a moſt eminent public teacher.

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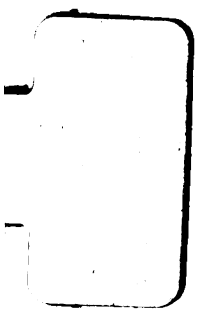
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